POST

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contents

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when I stopped working with
I was terrified of working on my
not because of fear of not
but of
talking to a mirror/master

But doing "debut" & later "post"
a collection of
I'm an
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the sugarcubes

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umbrella.

turned on by a selection

is three.

here come the tales
of some of those...

Meet the Statesman

Graham Massey

808 STATE formed in 1988 when Graham Massey, musician and producer, met Martin Price, owner of Manchester's most influential record shop, Eastern Bloc. They recorded an album, 'Newbuild', which they released on their own label Creed.

Always interested in new technology and approaches to music, for their next album Massey and Price teamed up with a couple of Manchester's hottest DJs, The Spinmasters. 'QuadraSTATE' was a huge underground hit and an early masterpiece of the new acid house sound. It included their classic track 'Pacific' which brought them to the attention of the major labels. When they signed to ZTT this was their first single. It was a top ten hit in the UK and Europe.

With 'Pacific' in the charts, the press and the mass public were waking up quickly to ambient house and techno. The band were heavily in demand for interviews and used the publicity to express their often-outspoken views on the record industry and music in general. This was followed by another album, '90', by which time the band had been adopted by the newly-emerging rave culture.

In addition to a further six albums, 808 State have launched STATE To STATE, an ambitious project, to provide strong links between the band and their fans, and explore other media. As well as their remixes for artists as diverse as Soundgarden and Bomb the Bass, to 'King of Comedy' for REM, they work in TV and radio and are happy to use the Internet as yet another channel of communication.

808 State are currently putting the finishing touches to their ninth album, due for release this year. Sjón went to interview Massey backstage at Channel Four's music show, The White Room, an hour before he was due on stage to perform 'Army Of Me' with Björk...

How did you get to know Björk?

"It's a difficult thing to put forward, to get across, but we'll have a go. In 1990 we got a phone call, Björk called us but didn't tell us who she was. I didn't recognise her though I was aware of The Sugarcubes from their tour that year. I loved 'Planet', it blows me away that tune. She just said she was an Icelandic singer playing it down, which is typically Björk I think. She told us she needed help with some electronics and programming, that she wanted to go that way.

"So we arranged to meet her in London where we were doing TV - The Word - and when she just walked into the studio we went: 'Oh yes, it's her!' I don't understand how we went that far without knowing it was her, it was kind of weird. It was like we knew her anyway, just instantly. It wasn't a big surprise. There was no period of getting to know each other, we were straight in there.

"She played us some stuff like 'Aeroplane' that she'd done with trombone, trumpet and two saxophones. It was like a quartet of brass instruments. It sounded nothing like what it ended up sounding, and you had to use a lot of projection and imagination to see what she was getting at by putting electronics in it. So we arranged to meet up again with her but the night after we'd met her, we had the idea of asking her to be on our album. We had no singing on it at the time. It was one of those 'Shall we? Shan't we?' decisions. Luckily we managed to reach her. She was just on her way to the airport when we rang and she had to make up her mind there and then. And she decided to come to Manchester [redacted] two songs on 'Ex-El'.

"We gave her a tape of 'Ooops' in the studio, she went for a walk for about four hours, came back and did it. Then we did the 'Qmart' track and that was completely improvised: one take. We were really pleased with it, what happened was something special. And we just took it from there..."

And you visited her home turf, Reykjavik.

"We went there to do the video for 'Ooops' when it was released as a single. And while we were over there Björk organised a concert. I think it's one of my favourites of all the concerts we've ever done. Everyone was so crazy that evening. There was a keyboard being brought from the north of the country, an amplifier from 40 miles away in the other direction. Everyone pulled together for it to happen and you realised that there was a real creative community, and it's only a small town Reykjavík, compared to places over here. Here you might have small artistic communities but there's not a lot of dialogue. It is very much dictated by the media, it doesn't stand on its own. The various ideas come from outside sources. Whereas the thing in Reykjavík was very functional, it had its own value there. Special people can come out of that because it's quite challenging.

"Over here it's almost as if it's set in a pattern, as if you could learn it from a book. There's not much argument going on whereas in Iceland it seems like you have to be sure about your ideas, or confident with what you're doing. I'm not saying that there's not people like that in various places over here, but what's special about Reykjavík is that it's so concentrated.".

Manchester seemed quite a dynamic place at that time...

"We came at a time when this whole sort of drug and club culture thing happened in our town. In a big way. I think a lot of the true spirit of what happened was never documented accurately. The media didn't pick up on it until a year or so later. Which is unusual and what made it so good. It didn't get a media overkill straight away. So it felt very much our own.

"The rules had changed about a lot of things, especially in music. It was like no-one was quite sure of themselves at that point because everyone knew this change had happened. The drugs had been a catalyst: suddenly a certain kind of music sounded much more functional and surface gloss wasn't important. The star thing went out of the window. It was just these strange electronic records, big records, very important records. Like 'Voodoo Ray' by A Guy Called Gerald, that was a key record. Another anthem was our 'Pacific State'. It had been the last record of the evening at the Hacienda for two years before it became such a hit. And it wasn't just a hit record, it was a culturally important record.

"It was the first thing we became famous for but we had our standards, it wasn't about getting our songs into the charts but having them played as the last song at the Hacienda. What was important was to have them appreciated by the people who were at the place where this thing was happening.

"This was a brand new culture and that was very precious. It was like: 'We can do THIS! We can do THAT! Let's try to stretch it out THAT WAY! Let's try THIS IDEA!'. Each record had a new idea, it was the freshness of working in that environment. And we worked day and night. We did nothing but music for a long time. You worked maybe to one o'clock in the morning, got it onto cassette, jumped in a taxi to the Hacienda and got it played. It was just an hour old and was now being played to 2,000 people. You were so in contact with what you were doing.

"Nobody had come up with a formula for this kind of music at that point. It hadn't become the boring thing a lot of dance music is now. A lot of dance music has lost that sense of adventure, it's just about making a quick buck. When we started we were pioneering a sort of electronic pop music. We got into the charts with some pretty bizarre music. We had Top Ten hits over here with songs like 'In Yer Face' which is nothing like a formulaic pop song.".

Then you started writing music with Björk...

"We started working on songs like 'Aeroplane' and did quite a lot of work in Manchester. That was just like in the initial stages of it. It was to evolve more later on, when Nellee Hooper got involved and took on the project.

"People are often very confused about what producers are. Producers have to have a hell of a sense of psychology to draw the best out of people. I think he was a very good choice at that point. Because the thing with me and Björk working together is that we're quite similar in our views on music. Which is something that can have a negative side to it: sometimes you need someone who's got a different opinion to balance things out. When me and Björk get together we get indulgent almost.

"The first time I went to her house and looked at her record collection it was so similar to mine. And when you're doing music those references can be incredibly valuable. You can take a lot of short cuts if you can say: 'Let's make it a little bit more like Roland Kirk.'.

"It's like a common language, straight away you know.

"The amount of time we've had to work together isn't nearly as much as I'd have liked. I think we've only scratched the surface really.

"A song like 'Army Of Me' is something we did in an afternoon. It wasn't a lot of work, it was very instantaneous. You know, it's very odd, you can come up with a backing track in a few hours and it's almost like the complete song is written, melody-wise and chorus-wise, even though most of it is in Icelandic or the other musical-sound language she uses! If you have a demo tape of them you get used to those wordless hums. They are almost as valuable as if they were words, sonically they're a terrific thing on a very basic level. When the words come later, the song's still got that source in it. It's quite an odd thing that. The words seem to spring from the melody. With most singers you get the feeling that the words just have to look good on paper, that they don't care about how the lyrics work with the melody. But Björk's very strong in that department. That's what makes her stand out.

"'Army Of Me' and 'The Modern Things' are quite old now. They were written before 'Debut' so they've been around for a long time. Then we did some more songs for 'Post' but they didn't make it onto the album. That doesn't mean they're all shit: when you're putting an album together you probably have three albums-worth of material. It is a crucial moment, you try to make the magic happen. It's like being a curator in a way, the choice of the songs is very important. That's one of my favourite things about making an album, getting the balance between the different elements.

"Making music with Björk is very different from making music by yourself. I might work on a song for a day, but once she's through with that piece, it's turned into something completely different. In a way, she's very much taken a producer role with her music. She's not one of those passive singers who has everything done for her. She's involved in every aspect of the music-making process.

"I've got quite a lot of strange little organs, string instruments, weird keyboards. It's like a music shop, or a toy box when you start playing with all the gear. And Björk would pick up on the strangest little loops and things. When you're in the middle of something and you think it's something epic, she'll pick up on one little clicking sound in the background. She'll focus in and take everything else away, cut through all the crap and get to the uniqueness of things.".

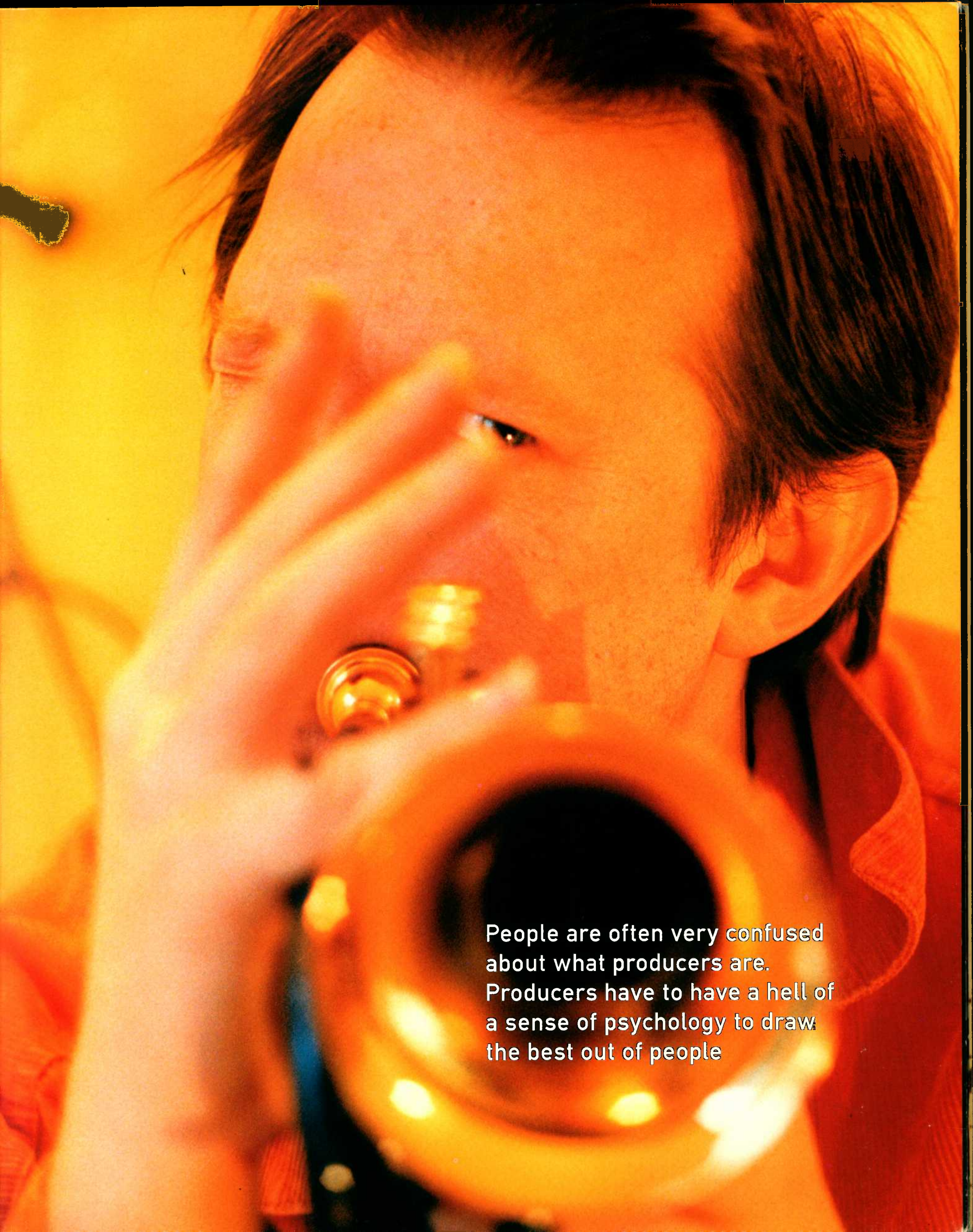
On 'Post' there are not only the two songs you wrote with Björk but also one dedicated to you, 'Headphones', about tapes you used to send her...

"We're both like archaeologists in music. We get interested in certain areas and follow that path to its sources. That's how the tapes came about, you pick a subject and make a tape about it. It's something I've always done. I've got certain tape friends around the world.

"It's very much trainspotting, you swap your findings with others...

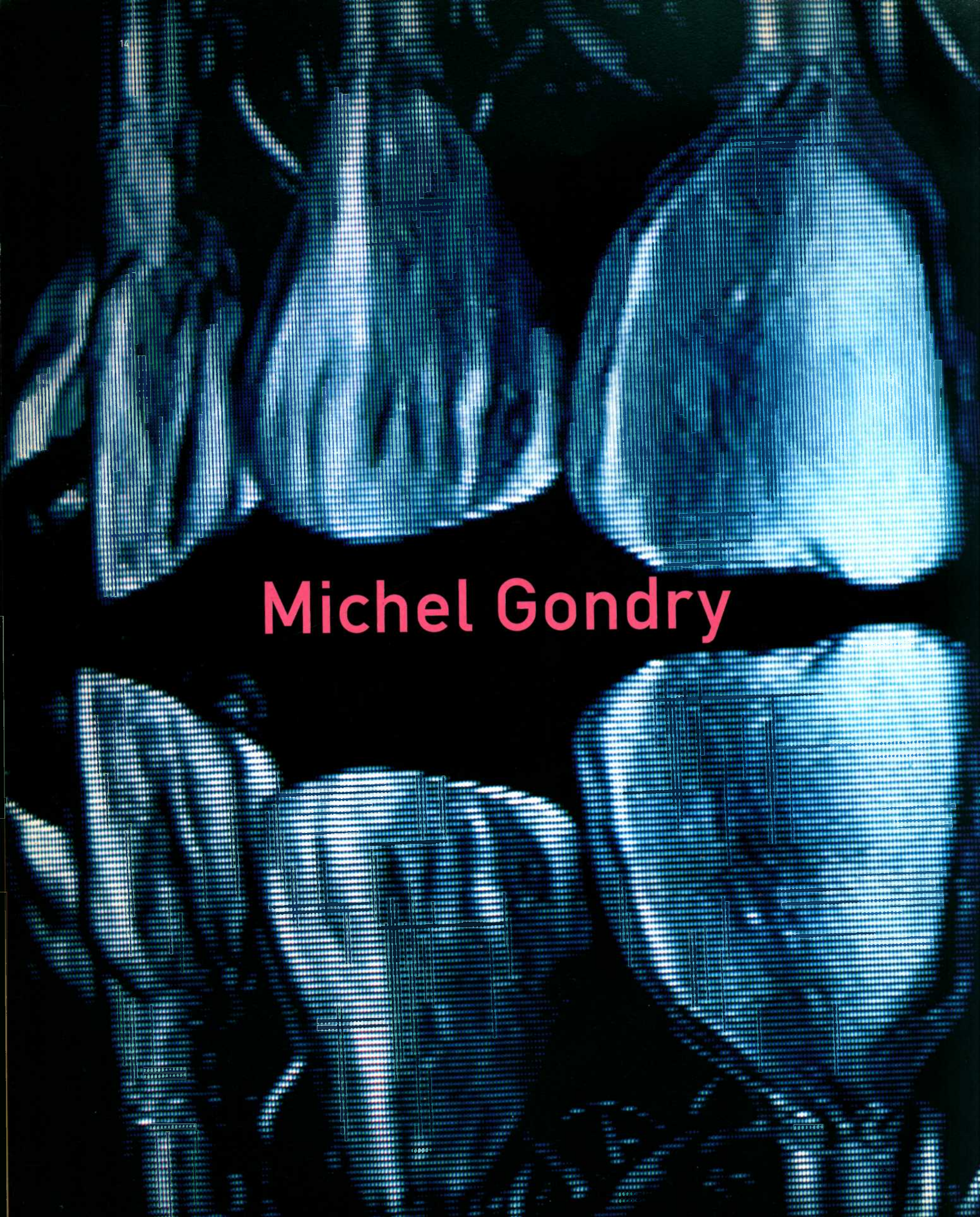
"On the tapes were very much things that have lasted because they don't stick to the rules. Or just plain genius. That's quite a rare thing these days. Everyone seems to have just learned The Beatles Song Book and how to piece it together with little tricks. Most people seem to draw from past areas in music without adding anything to it. There's very little music left that comes from the true spirit of adventure. There used to be much more.

"For me a lot of songs on Björk's new album have that quality to them. There's strong music that comes out of adventurousness. There are songs like 'Cover Me' which could come from any time - they're timeless. 'Post' is even more special than the album before and I think it has more longevity to it.".

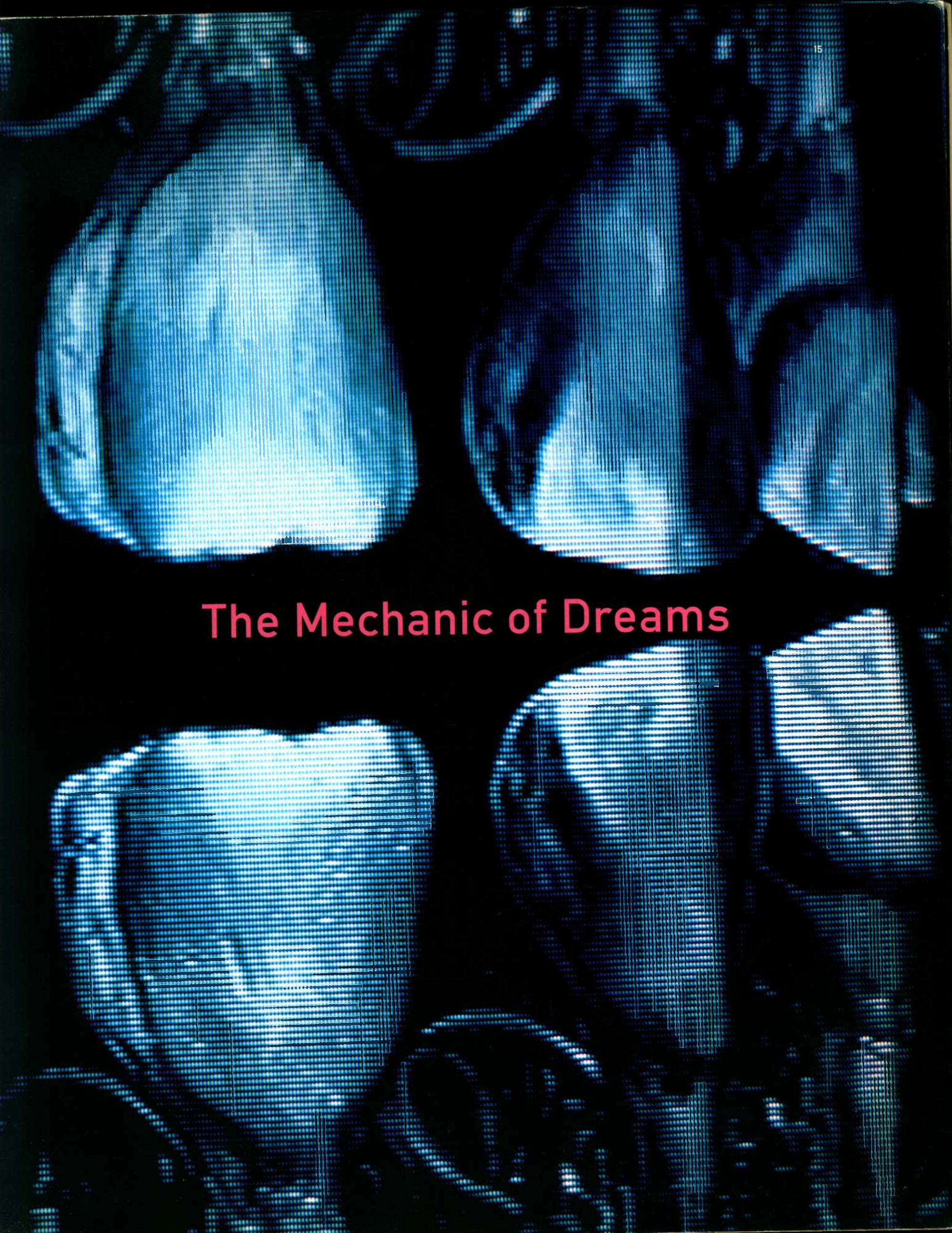


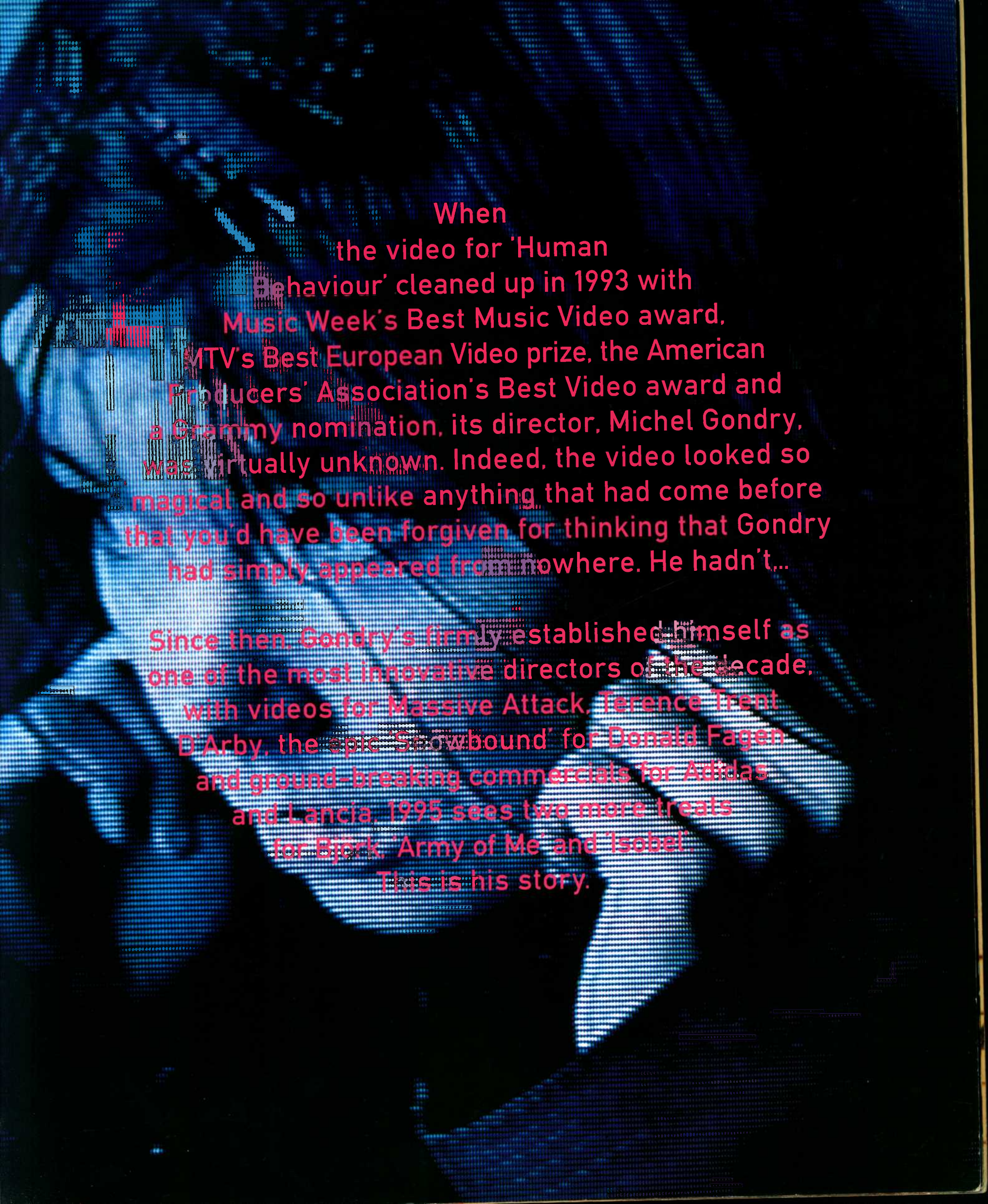
People are often very confused about what producers are. Producers have to have a hell of a sense of psychology to draw the best out of people

Michel Gondry



The Mechanic of Dreams





When the video for 'Human Behaviour' cleaned up in 1993 with Music Week's Best Music Video award, MTV's Best European Video prize, the American Producers' Association's Best Video award and a Grammy nomination, its director, Michel Gondry, was virtually unknown. Indeed, the video looked so magical and so unlike anything that had come before that you'd have been forgiven for thinking that Gondry had simply appeared from nowhere. He hadn't...

Since then, Gondry's firmly established himself as one of the most innovative directors of the decade, with videos for Massive Attack, Terence Trent D'Arby, the epic 'Snowbound' for Donald Fagen and ground-breaking commercials for Adidas and Lancia. 1995 sees two more treats for Bjork, 'Army of Me' and 'Isobel'. This is his story.

THE CHILD AS INNOVATOR AND DRAUGHTSMAN

"As a child I was interested in the possibilities that Lego and Meccano opened up, to create and invent new discoveries. My cousin and I used Meccano to build a prototype cartoon machine, quite similar to the zoetrope. It was a black circle with a gap to look at the little drawings. One of the stories we drew was about a journey in which you fractal zoom from a larger infinity to a smaller infinity. It started in space, with the planets, and then closed in on the Earth, then the continents, the countries and cities, the streets and the houses, down through a chimney, deep into the wood and right into the little atoms. Then it zoomed back out to the planets again. It was about a minute long, and we were 12 years old.

"These days my cousin is an architect, but he's still interested in inventions. He loves the idea of visual stereo and he's discovered a machine that draws in 3D. As you can imagine it's quite complicated. You draw into the air with a cursor that's connected to two small arms, and each arm holds a pen. If you trace over someone's face with the cursor, each pen draws it from a slightly different angle. You can see the portrait in stereo when you look at it with 3D glasses.

"As well as the cartoon machine, we used to make a lot of flip books. You know, the ones where you draw a sequence of pictures and flip them fast so they seem to move. We did one with a story about a man who goes to the toilet. This hand comes up out of the toilet and grabs his penis and then drags it through all the pipes.

"At the time we were very interested in horrific images, gore: when you're young there's stuff you have to shit out and you like horror. Later you progress to other things but it's important at that age.

"I was drawing from a very young age. I liked it. When people know you can draw they ask you to draw different things, so it's as though you're already part of society. If you're good at drawing you have a social role, however young you are. And you produce something tangible at the same time as being creative.

"Drawing also increases your status at school. I was the best draughtsman in my class, and I was able to teach the other boys how to draw naked women. It was a very simple picture made out of three lines and they soon picked it up.".

THE TEENAGER AS DRUMMER AND FILM FANATIC'S FRIEND

"You could say I came from a musical family. My grandfather, Constant Martin, invented one of the first keyboards. It was a little synthesiser called a Clavioline and I think 100,000 were sold in the UK alone. You'd stick it next to the piano and if you wanted to play the trumpet it would imitate one, in a shitty but charming kind of a way. My grandfather had an electronic church organ shop, which also did very well. Soon all the old pipe organs were replaced by electronic ones.

"Then my father took over the shop. Of course my father was much more into pop culture. He started selling electric guitars and was very cool. But pretty soon he was bankrupt because he'd just give the instruments away. If any young hippie really wanted one of his guitars or keyboards, but couldn't afford it, my father would practically let them have it.

"My family was a little bit like Pop Family - you know, like the families you could see in progressive sex education books at the end of the Sixties. On the first page you'd see the whole family out in the woods in flared blue jeans and then you'd turn the page and they'd all be getting naked, to let you know how good they were feeling together.

"We listened a lot to pop music, rhythm and blues, and my father was a big Duke Ellington fan. So I never got into music as some sort of reaction to my parents. I didn't have to use music to throw shit back at my parents. They gave me lots of freedom in thinking. I just listened to the music I had always liked.

"Before he lost the shop my father gave me a drum kit and my brother a bass guitar. We formed a couple of bands together, that played punk rock...or maybe it was more like New Wave...and that's how I got into music. Then when I left Versailles to go to art college in Paris I formed the band Oui Oui with some friends from college.

"Among my flatmates was a very good friend, Jean-Louis Bompoint, who was from Bordeaux. He used to tell me our music was terrible. He should have been born 50 years earlier, because he was always complaining about Modern Times. He was into jazz - very middle-class old jazz, like the New Orleans big band sound and swing. He knew loads of the jazz musicians who used to come there and play, like Lionel Hampton the vibraphone player.

"Jean-Louis directed films and his cinematic tastes were also rooted in the past. He loved movies by people like Marcel Carné and Jean Renoir. He had a big collection of their movies on video. We'd watch them night after night and he taught me how to appreciate them.

"In Paris I learnt what I liked and didn't like in films. I preferred the work of the surrealists or Jean Renoir to classic films such as Les Enfants du Paradis. Films like that were very well-made but they lacked the freedom of say Boudu Sauvé des Eaux by Renoir. Or Jean Vigo's L'Atalante, which for me is the best film of all time. What those movies have in common is they were experimental and had a feeling for modernity, and because of that they are still as fresh as they were 60 years ago.

"I also learned from Jean-Louis what the role of a director is; that he is someone who takes a project and actually makes it happen. It's so easy to talk and talk about the beautiful movies you're going to make in the future, instead of just getting on with it.

"When you do a video, an animation, or a short movie, it's not like writing where all you need is a pencil and paper. You have to be very practical and organise a lot of things to get a film off the ground.

"But if you don't do it, no-one else will do it for you.".

THE YOUNG MAN AS ANIMATOR AND BREADWINNER

"The first animation I ever made was shot with a camera and a little light I borrowed from Jean-Louis. It was a short piece about a policeman chasing a criminal through a city. I cut out the characters and backgrounds from paper and filmed it in my room, on the wall above the fireplace.

"I bought my first camera, a little 16mm Bolex, at the big annual market in Lille. Everyone goes there to eat fries and mussels and shop in the massive street market.

"When I got back to Paris Jean-Louis saw my new camera and said: 'What's this? Are you trying to take my place?' and I answered: 'No, no, I just want to do little things on my own...'

"I might still have that camera but it's probably broken now. I hated the way film people are so careful with their equipment, so I did all sorts with that camera. Like fixing it to a plank and swinging it around before I maybe dropped it.

"I was still in Oui Oui so I started doing animations to go with our songs, and at the same time I got my first job in animation as a line tester. The line test is the first shoot of the finished drawings and I just stood in the darkroom all day with a little camera, taking pictures and developing the films. I was already familiar with animation from the experiments with my cousin but at the animation company I also got the chance to learn how to edit, and later I was given the job of painting the sets.

"The cartoon I worked on was called Les Triplés, and it was horrible. It was for children's morning television and it stood for everything I hate. Very right-wing and racist. Its underlying message was that as long as there are cute blonde kids in the world everything will be all right. Truly disgusting, but I had to eat.

"Oui Oui published two albums and three singles in the 10 years we were together. The records didn't sell in Paris. Maybe the music was a bit too strange - it wasn't rock or pop! - or maybe we weren't mixing with the right people. But I got the chance to do videos for three of our songs so I'm happy with the time I was with the band. Those videos were the beginning for me: they weren't promos as such but they were the most creative things I could do with animation and film. Little independent stories that worked with the music. We didn't even have a budget for the videos, so I paid for them out of my own pocket. But that did mean there was nobody asking stupid questions or trying to tell me to do this or that. I had full control over what I was doing.".

NOW AS VIDEO DIRECTOR AND ASPIRING MOVIE MAKER

"Because of the Oui Oui videos, people in Paris started to ask me to do promos for French artists, but it was a difficult time. I was at that horrible stage where no-one believes in you yet. I'd come up with an idea and they'd ask me to make it smoother, more classical. In the end there wasn't much me left in them. But it got better, little by little, and I was able to cut my teeth on some bigger projects.

"Then Olivier, the boss of Island Records in France, sent my show-reel to Björk and I think it was when she saw the third Oui Oui video that she said: 'Ah, I like that!'. By then i was already working for big artists like Lenny Kravitz so I just thought it was fine that this girl wanted me to direct her video.

"But when she came to Paris and saw the other Oui Oui videos, it was the first time someone had appreciated the work I had done on my own terms, without compromises. Björk understood that while the images and the animation can look childish or sweet on the surface, they can operate on another level, and that was what I had been getting at in the Oui Oui videos.

"We started bouncing ideas off each other and I got the feeling that maybe this would be the one video in my life that I could be really proud of. We worked incredibly fast together. Björk poured ideas into my head and stirred them around. I'd come up with something and then she'd stir everything up again, and so it went on. When the video for 'Human Behaviour' did so well, the same people who'd wanted me to water down my ideas came back, but now they were asking me to do things in my own style. People were asking what crazy project I'd be working on next.

"Like most video directors, I'd like to do films. Maybe I'll start with a short film and see if I can do it. It's quite a leap from the three-minute promo to a 90-minute film. Even though I've told stories in the promos, they're so short. In a longer format you need a completely different narrative structure. We'll see, but I've got so many stories and ideas I'd like to put in a movie, and some dreams..."

Nellee Hooper.

Howie B.

Howie. Nellee. Marius and Björk.

Marius (with Björk hiding behind).

Björk in the Bahamas

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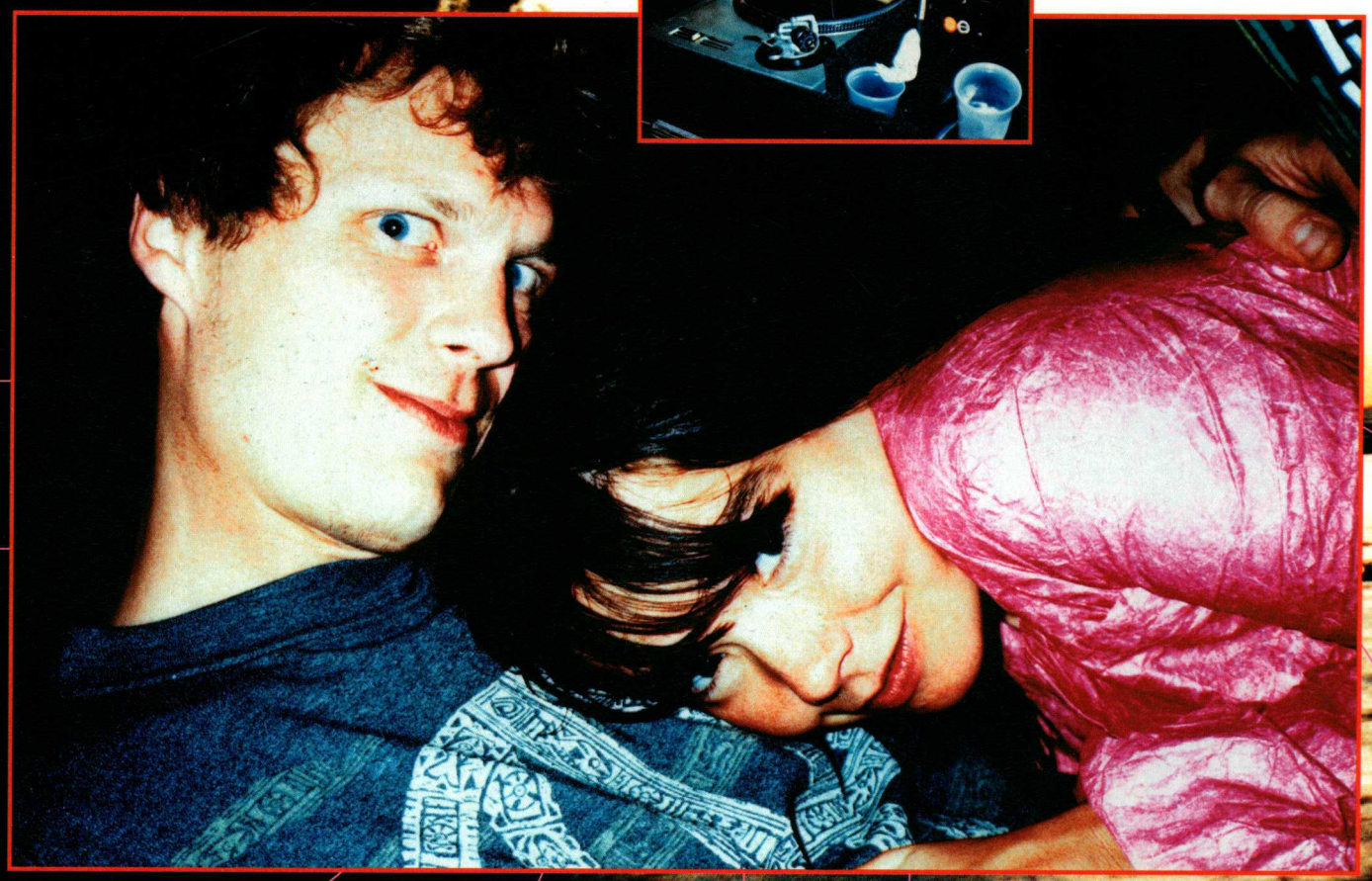
Howie Dj-ing at the 'end of recording' party.



Marius and Björk at the 'end of recording' party.

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Björk sitting just inside the cave for the vocals on 'Cover Me'.

Björk holding a microphone covered in a windproof hairy sock.

POST

Björk in Conversation

Here Come the

Warm Moths

How They Met

Björk Gudmunsdóttir was born in Reykjavík, the capital of Iceland, on 21 November 1965. Growing up in a hippie commune, she attended music school from an early age and recorded her first album when she was 11. In her teens she worked with a variety of punk and experimental bands in Iceland before fi[illegible]m international platform with The Sugarcubes. In 1992, after three albums, she split with the band to pursue a solo career. Björk lives in west London with her son Sindri.

Born in 1962, Sjón, (Sigurjón B. Sigurdsson) is a poet and novelist. In the early Eighties, as a member of Medusa, a collective formed within Reykjavík's artistic underground, Sjón performed with members of Iceland's punk-poetry counter-culture. For the purpose of 'Luftgitar', a song written by Sjón that appeared on the B-side of The Sugarcubes' single 'Deus', he became Johnny Triumph. He has published three novels in Iceland, the last of which was 1994's Thine Eyes Saw Me. More recently he contributed the lyrics for Björk's song 'Isobel'. Sjón moved to London early in 1995.

SJÓN: I think the first time I actually met Björk, I was introduced to her at Mensa, that was the best cafe in Reykjavík at the time. It was there that I'd met Thor Eldon, he was my best friend. Then he introduced me to this girl and I thought she was incredibly small. And I thought, 'Oh my God, Thor, you've picked up a baby!'. This was 1981. Even though there was only three years difference in our ages, I thought that Björk was much younger. I knew of Björk from the scene that was happening.

BJÖRK: I was in bands at the time...

SJÓN: She was 16 and I was 19. I was writing poetry and we were in this group of poets together, me and Thor, called Medusa. It was an experimental, surrealist poetry group. Thor and I met when we were 15, at school, and started writing poetry together. The aim was to write poetry and look handsome at the same time.

BJÖRK: There were a lot of bad hairdos actually!

SJÓN: Yeah! I had a sort of degraded rockabilly. Like your dad looked when he should have taken up The Beatles haircuts. A lot of Brylcreem involved.

BJÖRK: I had very short orange hair. Then I shaved off my eyebrows. I looked very strange. But Medusa were very active - published poetry, lots of performances. The whole punk scene in Iceland was always poets: between the bands they would stand there and scream. It wasn't delicate.

SJÓN: It was rock and roll in spirit, but the poetry at the same time was really serious. It was very surrealistic and dark and sexual and everything.

BJÖRK: Thor was my first love. I thought one of the most horrible things always was to get a boyfriend. All my girlfriends had just lost the plot when they got a boyfriend. So I never went out with boys. Then I met Thor when I was 16 and it was probably the only time in my life...I saw him and I still remember, it was a friend's birthday, and I saw him and it was love at first sight. He was wearing a white shirt with a piece from another shirt sewn onto his chest with green thread. Then it was just love. I moved into his house that same evening. I didn't have a clue who he was, he just looked gorgeous. I think he sort of knew who I was because he was in a band called Fan Houtens Koko - they were surrealists but it's impossible to compare them to others because they are still one of the most original bands to come out of Iceland ever. They were much more original than The Sugarcubes. Very very very experimental. Completely experimental. But at the same time very pop. Cabaret Voltaire, DAF, Can, that kind of scene. But completely like the eccentrics from hell.

I was in a punk band, a pop-punk band, Tappi Tikarrass. I was just about to get bored with my band because I had already tried everything I could do. So for me to meet Thor and especially all his friends was completely...astonishing! They were full of knowledge and full of things - performances with raw meat and screaming poetry at the same time.

I got to know everyone in Medusa, Thor and his friends, and each character was completely different, they were quite strong about being individuals, even though they were a group. They each had their own style. Sjón was very intellectual. At that time I was completely introverted and very much relied on instinct. And I remember arguing with Sjón about the surrealists, and me trying to say, 'No way it's all just with the head, you just can't decide it all.'. I was a big fan - typical 16-year-old thing of Miró and Frida Kahlo. I could agree with those guys. But guys like André Breton, I couldn't handle him 'cos he's just too much in the head. So when I got really drunk, say four in the morning, I would go round to Sjón's table, and he'd say, 'Oh no, not that girl again...', and I'd start saying, 'Yes, but you can't do art with the head, art isn't concepts and ideas, it has to be impulse!'.

So I was introduced to all these poets and it was brilliant and I was very honoured because at some point they asked me to join the poetry group. I hadn't really written poetry, only lyrics. I put out one little book but it wasn't really poetry, it was more like a little story. I hand-painted little pictures in it. At that time I thought it was just rubbish, but I realised later it was actually about, ahem, my life! I was 18 then. But that was my first impression of Sjón - he was the intellectual, very very well-read - he was the unofficial head of this group. And I was the 16-year-old punk shouting, 'You can't do art with your head, you have to do it with impulse!'. Later, I found out that all the guys in Medusa probably agreed with most of that. But it took a few years to get there.

SJÓN: There was so much in Björk's lyrics that was so close to what I thought was poetry. What should be in poetry.

BJÖRK: It's been a very slow process, that's why we're so close now. I never thought I was a lyric-writer, I thought I was a singer. He probably supported me most of all, of all people. he would come to me and understand what I was on about. He came to me and said what I was doing was worth something. And I was like, 'wooh!'.

SJÓN: That was important for me because I was up against everything in Icelandic poetry at the time. Most poetry had become very boring at that time. it was all very sociological and responsible and...

BJÖRK: Scandinavian!

SJÓN: Scandinavian! That liberal responsibility for others. But there was a raw energy in Björk's lyrics, a subconsciousness just speaking straight.

BJÖRK: Poetry is just so involved with freedom. For me, what he was screaming on stage had much more to do with what I later started to do with music. These guys words influenced my music more than all the other bands at the time. Just the philosophy and energy and a complete lust to have freedom. To sacrifice anything for freedom. And for me, as a 16-year-old, I couldn't imagine anything better. And I'd fallen in love? Yeah, nice cocktail!

SJÓN: That was what our surrealist poetry was so much about. It was about love, really! We were all writing love poems all the time.

BJÖRK: Still today I read those poems and I'm like...aarrgh! They're brilliant. This thirst for freedom and being 900% alive. Plus at that point I hadn't really read books because they were just a sign of being too clever and cold for me. But these guys would introduce me to all my favourite books, like Story of the Eye, The Master and Margarita. They would just look at me and say, 'Ah, you need this book now!'. I would go along all introverted and unconscious and say, 'I want something dark, wet.', and they'd say, 'This one.'. I sometimes do the same to people with music - 'You need this record, you've never heard this one before, it'll blow your head away!'. I can make a tape for a person and I know they will love it, even though they've never heard it before. It has continuity with what they are going through at the time. But to have that on a silver tray from these guys at that age, it just...changed my life really.

HOW WE GOT HERE

"I get so much out of collaborations. That's where I get all my nourishment."

It's a question of give and take. Learning to give and learn. How to find common cause in uncommon ground, how to make opposites attractive. How to find the jazz in a poem and the violence in happiness. It's about space-age NovaBjörk singing a big band show tune, or about crawling into a cave to see the light, or watching polar bears march on the city.

It's a question of moths.

Björk moved to London from Reykjavík in 1992. Iceland was a small world, and she had painted it more than once. Punk, goth, rockabilly, jazz and ABBA covers.

Poetry and books. Exhibitions and radio stations. Fish factory and antique shop. Anarchism and organisations. The ramshackle transit van tours of Europe that meant surviving on sugarcubes and not bathing for weeks. And, when the meagre fees for manic shows ran out, ducking behind cars and sucking their petrol through straws.

Björk had been there, done that, got bored.

In September 1990 the world had opened up. The Sugarcubes' second album, 'Here Today, Tomorrow, Next Week', had come and gone. Stuck in Iceland, short of money and in need of a baby-sitter, Björk was restless.

"I was freaking out in Iceland then," she remembers, "because I've always got the feeling that the clock is ticking, and I have to write the best song before I die. And I'd already worked with everyone I was interested in working with in Iceland. Had climaxed with all of them and was probably starting to fade with all of them. And usually the most intimate relationship I have is with the percussion people, the drummers. And at that point I had worked with Siggi Baldursson of The Sugarcubes for 10 years. The ingredients, the core of what I was doing for 10 years, was a sort of prolonged conversation with Siggi. That was the structure. That's what turned me on. That's the real thing.

"So at that point I was freaking out because I could not only feel that he was starting to become predictable for me, but also the other way round. I knew what he would do and he knew what I would do. The erotic, sex thing goes out of it and it's not, whoosh, one plus one is three anymore. It's just one plus one is two.

"So I was listening to a lot of music at the time, and the rhythms that turned me on was the album '90' by 808 State. The music was rave, and I didn't even know what rave was, but I could see that right inside the middle there was this core of rhythms that I could identify with very deeply.".

Björk contacted 808 State in Manchester. Graham Massey was bemused by the shy voice on the telephone introducing herself simply as a singer from Iceland. She sounded 12 years old. Björk didn't say who she was, because she didn't think the Mancunian dance commandos would have heard of an art-rock/anarcho-punk band from Iceland. This wasn't a music biz collaboration thing. "I wanted to meet my other half. The beat machine that would turn me on, you know?".

Björk asked her mother to baby-sit Sindri and went to England. She met 808 State on the set of a riotous late-night television show. Björk was nervous. She had written out the brass arrangements for two songs, 'Aeroplane' and 'The Anchor Song', and made a cheap demo tape helped by Icelandic students playing trombone, trumpet and saxophone. "I was wondering if you could write some rhythms underneath it," said Björk quietly. "Yeah sure," said 808 State loudly. "Let's go to the pub..." Björk went home to Iceland thinking, "Yeah, I think it went well. I'm not really sure!".

Björk returned to London in November and stayed with a friend, sleeping under a grand piano. On the day she was due to fly home, to spend her birthday with her son, Graham Massey called. 808 State were recording their new album would she come up to Manchester that night and do some vocals? She would and she did. "I was completely in heaven. Something opened that door for me.". The next day Björk went out in the rain with an uncompleted 808 song, 'Ooops', to listen to on her personal stereo.

'That's how I met Graham. I just knew then that we'd be friends for a long time.".

Two years later Björk and Massey would write the first of 'Post's' songs together.

HOW IT WENT

ARMY OF ME

Björk and Graham Massey would send each other personal compilation tapes between Manchester and Reykjavik, trading advice on their love-lives. The friendship and the understanding bloomed. Because of the tapes they knew each other inside out. In one afternoon in 1992 the pair wrote 'Army of Me' and 'The Modern Things'. "That day we just sat there and giggled," Björk remembers. "Very spontaneous.".

There are parallel lines and shooting-star tangents here. 'Army of Me' is a singular focus begetting plural passion, as Sjón commented, "There's not like a straight plot or storyline in this.".

"Not really," agrees Björk. "For example, 'Debut' was so different from song to song. In 1990 I was obsessed with saxophones and 'Aeroplane' and 'The Anchor Song' came from that. In '92 I was obsessed with Chet Baker and out comes 'Like Someone in Love'. There's all these different periods. 'Debut' was like the greatest hits of 10 years, really, whereas this album is just the last two years.".

And yet it's even more wide-ranging. More eclectic.

"I think that's because I've become better at what I'm doing. In a way 'Debut' and 'Post' are the same thing, but the before and after. Now I'm going to get my own studio upstairs in my house, where I sleep - the main problem is I'm gonna have to call the police in the middle of the night 'cos I'm working in the studio! 'Make me stop,' I'll say, 'I'm trying to sleep!'. I'm gonna start a new, very difficult relationship with myself!

"So anyway that's a new period starting now. 'Debut' and 'Post' was when I was learning and working with a lot of people. Basically I don't think of 'Post' as more diverse than 'Debut'. It's just that the mad songs are more mad, and the delicate songs are more delicate. I could exaggerate all the things better, because I'm better at what I'm doing.

"With 'Army of Me' we were trying to make a song that would be played at heavy metal clubs. It was very challenging! All the heavy metallists are so honest in their lyrics - they're all about hell. Death. The virgin. Good and bad. Very blue-eyed, good and bad and honest. So I wanted to write a lyric that was the nightmare from hell - believe me this was many years before Beavis and Butthead! - where a heavy metal band would have all these lyrics about having wings and flying over the planet with your guitar for a solo. And in the middle of the set the mother would arrive to tell them off - 'Did you eat your orange this morning? Where did your socks go? Why are you home so late?'! So that was me and Graham's local joke of the day.

"And of course, I found out later it, ahem, was about my life..."

HYPER-BALLAD

Is 'Hyper-ballad' a product of Björk's homeland, an isolated island experiencing extremes of heat and light and shape, where a person can be violently happy, a ballad can be hyperactive, and the people and the places are in permanent turmoil?

SJÓN: Of course your surroundings influence you, if you're alive. We have very extreme weather, extreme light, extreme nights, and you have to face up to the fact that just going out for milk in Iceland can be hell! Because you've got a screaming snowstorm. Just going to work can be like...

BJÖRK: An Indiana Jones mission...

SJÓN: Yeah, yeah, it really is. So maybe because of the weather and the environment you become aware of all the small things that make up life. Emotionally, you can focus on the small things. I think that sensibility is in a lot of stuff that Björk does. The small things in life are as important as the big ones. But I also think it's part of the whole ideology of where we come from. The whole surrealist thing...

BJÖRK: Realistically, being from Iceland affects me in two ways. The first is in the genes of Icelandic people - especially because they were isolated for 1,200 years and obviously they could only interbreed. There's this hardcore optimism. If you don't work 18 hours a day you're a loser. It was very hard to live there, the weather is hardcore. People in Iceland still don't know how to have a civilised meal. It takes them five minutes to eat, because they work while they eat. I'm exaggerating here, but there's always this kind of hurry, trying to make the most of your time. There's this workaholicism, it's the only way to survive. I truly think that people who didn't live like that usually died! It's the survival of the fittest, it really is. We are born to exaggerate and do the maximum.

The second thing is the group of people I grew up with, Medusa and the lot that later became the Sugarcubes had to fight so hard for our existence. It was very DIY. We put up our own posters by hitchhiking. We'd go on television and the nation would hate us. But we just had to do it. It was a necessity. Otherwise we would die. Obviously I'm exaggerating, but that's the atmosphere I was brought up with. You have to push to the limit. It's an urge.

SJÓN: It's a manic society. Everybody is manic about what they're doing. But at the same time it's a manic-depressive society. So you also get these deep, disturbing feelings. Even when you're running around doing everything at the same time, you're aware of the darkness and the disturbing feelings in you.

BJÖRK: Yeah.

THE MODERN THINGS

"A lot of my friends are so scared of computers and technology. I wanted to write this lyric about all these Walkmans and remote controls crawling up your leg and jumping inside your head and taking over. Like science fiction. Of course it's rubbish because computers are just tools. If I hear one more person saying there is no soul in computer music I will puke. The reason there is no soul in it is because no-one put it there. It's like looking at a guitar and asking it to write a song.

"I wrote 'The Modern Things' on the train to Manchester to see Graham and there were all these mountains. It was just my little revenge to all the people who criticise me and say, 'You're not doing guitar rock any more. You've sold your soul'.

"So, I'm just teasing those people..."

IT'S OH SO QUIET

"In a way it was against my principles to do an old cover-version because I'm so anti-retro. But it has this story, this narrative: there's a beginning and something happens in the middle and the ending is different. So many pop songs, especially in English lyrics, are just 900 different ways of saying 'She left me!'. Which I actually love because it's pop, just one idea, very simple, it doesn't mean it's cheap. Or 10 different ways of saying 'Celebrate!' or 'You're sexy!' for three minutes. I can relate to that. Not that one form is better than the other. But just that I belong to the story-telling group.".

ENJOY

Björk likens her writing relationship with Graham Massey to the one she enjoys with Tricky. That is, bi-polar. With both collaborators, stomach-ache from too much laughter, or head-aches from too much talking are equally likely, and equally viable. One side of the friendship gives noise, energy and vibrancy: 'Army of Me' and 'Enjoy'. The other gives quiet solace and succour: 'The Modern Things' and 'Headphones'.

"Always you have got these two poles. That's why 'Army of Me' became so physical and hard: it's not really destructive, it's more like we've got this energy in our relationship, if we want we can turn it up to 10; and we've got this rich, almost intellectual, weaving, interesting, many-sound level as well.".

And 'Enjoy'?

"My relationship with Tricky has a lot of energy, very raw. 'Enjoy' in a way was about... - I wish: I want to stay here... but you have to move on... - this is sex without touching... Just enjoy. That's very characteristic of our relationship.".

YOU'VE BEEN FLIRTING AGAIN

"I was panicking when I came back from recording in the Bahamas that all the songs I'd done were done only with technology. I don't like that. The way I look at the balance of all the organic instruments and the computers is the same way I like to balance reality and fantasy. The album's got 50:50 and it should be that way. With computers, the way you should use them is that you can make up whatever instrument you want, computers stand for fantasy - like you can have a violin with 97 strings and green hairs. You can do that. I compare it to Roger Rabbit - the woman can just be exactly what he wants her to be.".

The success of the computer-enhanced 'Debut' meant Björk "became a bit too brave with 'Post'.". That is, too many computers, not enough instruments. Too much brain, not enough instinct. Bob Hoskins versus cartoon woman. String arrangement versus computers. And then you've got the organic reality all around it.

Unfinished album tape in hand, she called up Eumir Deodato. She knew Deodato from his earliest work. Starting off his career as a classical string arranger in Brazil in the Sixties, he was one of the architects of a new music. He combined the country's traditonal sounds with string orchestra and jazz.

"On the same song you got all the rawness and ethnicity, all the nature and all the sexuality," Björk enthuses, "together with all the sophistication and development that Western civilisation has achieved. It's the best of both. That's so rare to find in the same song, in the same musical style. That's something that maybe some creatures like Brian Eno have sometimes managed to get by mixing together, say, African tribal music and general synthesisers. There one plus one is three.

"So I called up Deodato and said 'You've got to do this, you've got to do this!'. And he didn't know who I was and was quite confused. But then he came over to London and rehearsed two songs, 'Hyper-ballad' and 'Isobel'. Because it went so quickly I decided to add a third song. And that was 'You've Been Flirting Again'.".

While the orchestra took half an hour off for dinner, Björk sat down at the piano and played the string arrangement she had in mind. Deodato wrote it out for the orchestra. One take later and it was down on tape.

Björk beams: "That was my first string arrangement. That's what I'm probably most proud of on the whole album. I feel like I've just passed a maths test!".

SURREALIST INTERLUDE: BJÖRK ON MICHEL GONDRY, VIDEO DIRECTOR

"I love Michel because he's so naturally surrealist. I've said on many occasions that I'm not surrealist. And that's not because I don't think I am. At the end of the day everyone is. The word surrealist has just taken on a completely different meaning, it's probably one of the most misunderstood terms. To be a surrealist today is to have a lobster on your head. That just pisses me right off. For me true surrealism is that not only have I got five fingers and I'm sitting on a chair, that's fact, but also the way I feel is fact too. And if the person I love walked into the room I would feel completely different to the way I would feel if someone I hated walked in. How can you explain that? It's a fact. And if I spend a lot of time with someone I hate I will become sick or get cancer or something like that. But if I spend a lot of time with someone that I love I would be very healthy. How can you explain that? For me, that is surrealism.

"When I was about 18, Sjón came to my school and gave a lecture on surrealism. And everyone was mad at him and wanted to throw rocks at him. He said, 'If I feel like a train is driving through my head, it is!', and people just went, 'Shut the fuck up!'. It's that kind of thing.

"That's how I explain how everybody goes on about ghosts and the fact that Iceland is full of elves and goblins. Of course it's complete nonsense. Just the fact that you miss someone very very much, of course he's following you around, and you're gonna see him. It's common sense. That's how I look at surrealism. And

when Michel gets his strokes of genius and, in the video for 'Army of Me', wants a dentist that's a gorilla to find a diamond in my mouth, some people call it nonsense. But it's probably the most realistic way of him expressing what situation I'm in - all these people trying to take things away from me, and the gorilla finding a diamond that I don't know I have and then stealing it. 'Army of Me' is so much about me actually learning that I have to defend myself. I have to stand up and fight the fucking gorilla. Once I've got the diamond and I run away with it, it becomes massive 'cos it's mine. But if the gorilla had kept it, it would have gone really tiny. That's surrealism for me.".

ISOBEL

Here come the warm moths...

Björk had a book full of the lyric ideas for 'Isobel' but nothing that worked. Turmoil!

"I'd been fighting like a lunatic, and going completely bonkers. I knew that if I waited for three months, threw away the book, preferably burning it, then I'd wake up one morning with the lyric. But I badly wanted this song on the album. I didn't know what to do!".

What she did was contact Sjón, who'd recently moved to London.

Björk told Sjón lots of stories. He tried to get the essence of these stories, of this woman who is like a force of nature. He found images that could explain it, give it all without having to tell the whole story.

Within a day Sjón has the backbone of the lyrics. In a heart full of dust lives a creature called lust..., but something is missing. Björk, meanwhile, is about to do her first photo shoot in a year. Feeling slightly apprehensive, she goes to put on her favourite orange nylon shirt. There's a moth on the collar. "Well, it's good to have some support," thinks Björk. She delicately puts on the shirt, goes out, hails a taxi, and heads for the swimming pool. The moth is still there. Even though it is her favourite - and posh - shirt, Björk doesn't want to shut it in the locker. "Because then I'm forcing it to stay. I'll give it the option," she thinks. So she hangs it near a window. Dives in. Swims. Trains. Comes back 90 minutes later. The shirt, and the moth, are still there. "Oh shit," thinks Björk, "I'm the chosen one, I'm lucky!".

To the photo shoot, moth in tow. A gaggle of giggling fashion victims try to force her to change. The moth flits to Björk's other collar and hides underneath. Not wanting to be the prima donna, Björk changes clothes. Some hours later, after the photo shoot, she puts her shirt back on. The moth looks at her and flies out of the window.

Björk goes home and phones Sjón, and tells him her tale. "I think the moth came from The Unexplained, the Fifth Dimension," she jokes. "It just came from The Unexplained and was trying to teach me: don't understand, just let it happen, just relax..."

SJÓN: I picked up on this because my mind was completely occupied with 'Isobel'. It just dawned on me that this was a message from this character. Because Isobel is Nature in a way. She just visited Björk, she showed her presence! I'm also saying this in a stupid way! But it fitted so completely with the lyrics. There was this part at the end I was having difficulty in finding words for: When she does it she means to, moth delivers her message, unexplained on your collar, crawling in silence, a simple excuse... It just came to us.

BJÖRK: So he made up this thing that Isobel would have all these moths and send them out into the world and they would fly inside the windows of all the people who are too clever and trying to understand too hard. Of course a creature that came from The Unexplained wouldn't try to use logic on you, it just goes 'nana na nana' and confuses you.

SJÓN: So when you want to get the answers for all the questions like 'Why do volcanoes erupt and flood whole cities?', 'Why do we have earthquakes?', you just sing 'nana na nana'. And the moth comes to you and sings back!

Doing this with Björk was the essence of all the things we have talked about through the years. The lyrics are really about 1981, '82, '83. I'm sure we opened a way to the astral plane with Isobel.

POSSIBLY MAYBE

"It starts with Your flirt finds me out... - somebody's been flirting with you for ages and suddenly it finds you out. ...teases the crack in me, smittens me with hope...: somebody's flirt finally works on you. And then you decide to go for it. I was obsessed with, you know, the song they always have in the church - 'ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong' - and I was trying so hard to write about this period in my life and it was so difficult. So I decided, OK, do it this way - it was a nine-month period where I fell in love, went all the way to the bottom, found out it wasn't really love, went up again, walked out of the water, got a towel, dried myself, and walked away. So the last verse is Since we broke up, I'm using lipstick again, I'll suck my tongue, as a remembrance of you...

"I wanted each verse to be each month. The first month is February, and the next verse is March. There's maybe 30 seconds between each verse, so you're listening to the song and 30 seconds later is another month. It's a calendar thing. I wanted to have ...possibly maybe...(dingdong, dingdong)...probably love...(ding-dong), then boiiing! the first verse. Just to show how you feel different each month when you're going through a relationship. That's why I decided to have all the choruses the same, but it's a different melody every verse.

"And then I wanted sound effects, like in volcanoes.".

I MISS YOU

It sounds like high-kicking crickets in a chorus line.

"That's very much Howie B's energy in the song. That atmosphere is definitely Howie's. Nervous, pant, pant, you haven't got time to do everything you want to do, over-enthusiasm. I went to Howie and said that I wanted an energetic song, a physical song. Modern Latin music. I wanted him to do exactly what he wanted, and I knew he would be completely free. I wouldn't be nailing him down by saying that.".

COVER ME

"Before I started 'Post' there was a big question for me and Nellee if we should work more together. Up 'til then it had been perfect but half of me started thinking that I would be a coward if I didn't move on, take risks and work with other people.

"We ended up deciding that I would head off, work with other people, then bring the goods back and we would produce it together. Nellee suggested that I should do my bit and he'd function as safety net in the back.

"I wrote 'Cover Me' about that. While I crawl into the unknown, cover me. I'm going hunting for mysteries, cover me... - like Starsky and Hutch ...I'm going to prove the impossible really exists. This is really dangerous, cover me. But worth all the effort, cover me.

"Nellee heard the lyric for 'Cover Me' and he wanted to send me into a cave. So in the Bahamas he actually sent me down a cave full of bats and I didn't know they were there. As I went into the cave, I had headphones and a very long lead and it was dark and he said, 'If I get into trouble just pull on the microphone lead.' - it was like he was waiting in a boat and I was down diving and if I got into trouble I'd pull on the rope and he'd pull me up.

"I walked inside. The music came over the headphones and I was crawling on all fours. I'm going hunting for mysteries, cover me... and all these bats were flying round my head! And you could actually hear bats singing on the tape!".

Björk came back to London and reluctantly decided to scrap the tape. She wanted harpsichord and dulcimer on it. She wanted it live. She recorded 'Cover Me' again.

"So in theory, it's the cave. In practice, it's the studio.".

HEADPHONES

In a hotel room Tricky plays Björk a drum pattern and melody. It's only three or four notes, but already strong in atmosphere. Simple but strong. Simple but definite. Björk has had some lyrics waiting for just such a moment for the last four years.

"I wrote them in Iceland when me and Graham kept sending each other tapes - he would just save my life! I would wait till the evening, put my headphones on and just listen to the songs. And it would be so nurturing to fall asleep to the music... 'Headphones' is a lot about that. I always had this lyric at the back of my head and would put it to subconscious music, all the noises you hear when you are asleep. It's just so nutritious. There's no defences, or analysing or logic. So I said that to Tricky and he said 'Fine by me'.".

HOW ON EARTH...?

The collaborations continue. Björk is preparing 'Telegram', "the alternative version of the songs on 'Post'". In part due to the success of a fleet of remixes that accompanied the singles from 'Debut', collected on the album 'the best mixes from the album - debut for all the people who don't buy white - labels'. Equally, though, 'Telegram' has something to do with Björk's contribution to MTV's Unplugged series. On that occasion Björk worked with an orchestra and a man playing wine glasses and she was excited by the possibilities this generated.

Instead of artist and remixer creating separately in isolation, she prefers to work together. 'Telegram' is Björk working with her favourite people. For the revamped 'Hyper-ballad', the Brodsky Quartet would be the Brodsky Quartet and Björk would be Björk. Eumir Deodato has done a lush string version of 'Isobel' with a 20-piece orchestra. Maverick jungle star Goldie has done one too. There is a pipe organ version of 'Sweet Intuition', a B-side from 'Army of Me', as well as mixes from Underworld and The Black Dog. Massive Attack's 3D is picking one of her songs and writing another version of the lyrics. Classical percussionist Evelyn Glennie played "a marimba as big as a Cadillac" on one song, a set of exhaust pipes on another. A Japanese accordionist might also be getting involved.

And onwards and upwards and sideways. Nothing and no-one is out of range. There are no limits. Sjón likes the fact that Björk's lyrics are concrete and specific, but have universal pertinence. You could enjoy them on Mars, he says, "but I was wondering: why so many collaborators?".
Björk pauses. Thinks. Speaks.

"The thing I'm learning about myself is that because I've had so many experiences, I love to be in all these different little roles. I get bored very quickly. If I'm just a singer or producer it's very boring for me. I think it's something I was born with which is...it's a good thing and a bad thing at the same time, a question of learning to make the most of it.

"I've got this urge to forget about myself, to lose my ego, and to either become the song or become involved in a working relationship. I know - at least this month, I might change my mind in a year - that my life seems to be a collection of relationships. I seem to be quite good at becoming the other half of a person. I can be the person with common sense, who's quite cold and musical, but I can also be the stupid nonsense person who's just full of moths, someone like Nellee Hooper has to stand and make sense of it all. And then with Tricky, he's Mr Chaos, likes to be Mr Unpredictable and turn his back to the world and play hard to get. When you listen to the Tricky album none of it looks you in the eye, you always have to go inside and find it, and there I am, David Attenborough, in the middle saying, 'Well, Tricky is a bit happy now. He's just gone sulky. He's being cheeky now.' - I can be that link. On 'Headphones' and 'Enjoy', I put the face-and eye-contact into the song.

"It sounds like I'm really big-headed, but at the same time I think that's my weakness. It's hard for me to work on my own and get stimulated. It's like masturbating. Just hasn't got the magic..."

Björk pauses. Thinks. Speaks.

"Communication is what it's all about. And that's my little speech!"

HOW WE MOVE ON FROM HERE

SJÓN: What I found out when I was talking to all the people Björk's worked with was that they very much share the feeling I got when I worked on the lyric for 'Isobel', that Björk just pumps you up with ideas and you throw them back. It's a very strong working method. It's like you create a force field, the two of you become one. If working with people just to become the other person's other half is what Björk thinks she's about then I'm sure she'll become very good at it. We have too much ego in the world to get rid of that and be able to unite so strongly is very precious.

I want people to realise that there is a massive project going on here and it's still in progress. I would like people to see that they are only getting a glimpse of Björk's universe and that universe is full of activity. It's the Big Bang three minutes after it happened and it's going very fast.

BJÖRK: That's very much the reason why I wanted to do a magazine. I've been attacked with fan requests from Day One, and I still feel like when I was a punk in K.U.K.L., and The Sugarcubes, if people came and asked us for an autograph we told them to fuck off and get a life. It was just against all our individualism if people were fans. You have to be your own person.

I said, 'Listen, I'll call an old friend of mine and if he wants to do a magazine, I'll do it. Because I know the way he will do it is that the magazine is not about me, because I've already given the songs on my record - I can't give any more than that, that's all there is to me at the end of the day; and to show all those people who don't value the work of the people I've collaborated with, that I'm just an umbrella for them. All these people I work with, that's what I'm on about. I work with people, to talk about these people and try to ignore me as much as possible. People have already got me in the songs and all those magazines all around the world.'.

SJÓN: Who she chooses to work with tells you much more about the project than maybe she can do.

BJÖRK: I think so, in many ways. I think you are born with certain things and then in the first five years or so your character is formed by what happens to you and how you react to it. From then on you are not trying to add to yourself so much. You are trying to learn as much as you can, in as short a time as possible because you only have 80 years on this planet, to get it out of you.

It's very much about this attitude I was introduced to when I was 16, when we met: just having your antennae completely out, and taking part in it all, at all levels. From an earth sense, from a sex sense, from a heart sense, from an intellectual sense, your ears and your eyes. I think I'm a coward if I can't react to every situation possible. I want to learn that. And Sjón's doing the same thing - taking part of life at every level.

And another thing. It's also a question of, still, today, wanting to know how to pay an electricity bill and straight after be as spontaneous as hell and go to the astral plane. None of these things are more important than the other things.

SJÓN: You also have to pay your electricity bill in the astral plane...

SKUNK ANSIE

"Skunk Anansie?"

"Through the Yellow Door"

Sjón pauses outside the door.

In the Middle Ages, the flags that flew over plagued cities were yellow, weren't they? And who's that crying out the name of the Nazarene? Silence - for a moment. Then the same voice screams the name of a little baby called Swastikkka. It's a female voice and it strikes him that this kind of music was never meant to be sung by long-haired males.

How to describe the indescribable music of Skunk Anansie? A sort of Neo-heavy-punk-indie-funk, but that only scratches the surface.

Is it wise to disturb them? Gritting his teeth, he knocks on the door.

The door's thrown open and Skin, Skunk Anansie's lead-singer, says "Hi" to him and, simultaneously, someone on the other end of the phone. More greetings, and Sjón steps into the world of Skunk Anansie to perish in their words:

> No time for me, your life's in greed,
> your days won't last, gotta have it all,
> you smile, out loud, so crass, all heart,
> big mouth, small brain, you want it all.
>
> You Want It All

Back in the real world: Skin packs up her microphone, while the rest of the band (Ace, Louis and Cass) turn into roadies and pack up the instruments, clearing out the rehearsal room before the next band arrives.

Where do you come from?

Skin: I'd guess you can say we're London-based, here is where we work. We've been together since March '94, Louis and I were in a group before, but when Ace quit with his old band we formed Skunk Anansie. From there things happened pretty fast. Rick Lennox from One Little Indian came to our second-ever gig and liked us right away. We decided to go with them because we were more after artistic freedom than the money. To have control over the music is very important to us.

The main thing we wanted to do was tour, to do loads and loads of gigs, but we thought if we were to do that, we should get our album together first. We had like 20 songs and we started recording them in September, finishing in December. And now we've been touring since January.

So what's the motivation behind your music?

Skin: Basically being in a band...
Ace: ...a gang...
Skin: Yeah - a gang - and tour everywhere, but there's also a serious side to it. A lot of the songs, a lot of the lyrics, are seen by people as quite political. Which is cool, but motivation-wise for me personally it's that I want to be in a live band, to be able to stand up and say what I want to say and not having anyone telling me how to do it. The best way to do that is to be in a band and play music.
It's not like there's a big manifesto behind Skunk Anansie, no big pop-political theories. What our songs are about is what we see walking down the street, everyday issues. Unless you walk around blind you can't miss them, and they inspire in you a lot of aggression and anger.

And where does the music come from?

Skin: We all come from a different background. I was mainly brought up on reggae. My brother was a toaster in a sound system. When he was up all night playing tunes he taped them and played it all back to us when he got home. Apart from that I was into pop music, you know, I watched every music programme there was on television no matter how ridiculous.
Ace: My music was heavy rock, Sex Pistols, grinding guitars kind of thing. I've still got my old records but I don't really listen to them that much. I'm more into things that are happening now...
Skin: We're into new things and modernity, and people who take things further instead of churning out the same old stuff.
I mean everybody has their influences and are marked by what's happened before, but that's how it should stay, as influences. It shouldn't be the main substance of what they're doing.
We're a band of the future, because if you just look at the way the band is made up, it's what life is like in this country in 1995. Everybody is mixing with everybody else: Caribbean, Asian, pink skin, and everybody is into rock music. Rock music isn't a white thing anymore and you can see it in a lot of bands who are coming up now.

> This lunch-time I ate Tiger's stew,
> This lunch-time I ate Tiger's stew,
> This lunch-time I ate Tiger's stew
> But Tiger didn't know.
> Tiger in the Forest, Anansie in the Web

Skunk: A furry little creature, black and white, that emits a powerful and nauseating smell if disturbed.

Anansie: The spider-man of Caribbean mythology

By now Skin and Sjón have moved out of the rehearsal studio's shadows, into the sunlight.

Tell me the story of the 'Army of Me' remix you did.

Skin: We were right in the middle of doing our tour when Kenny from One Little Indian came to our gig and asked us if we were interested. We'd actually heard the track when we were finishing our album, we liked it. It was very solid and it almost reverberates through you, but we weren't sure if it was right for us to do it. We thought about it for a day - we'd just had our single released and we didn't want people to think we were just jumping on Björk's bandwagon. The fact is we're far too stroppy to do anything for anyone else unless we like it.
Then, because we really liked the track, we decided to do it if we were allowed to do the version we really wanted to do, if we had our say in the making of it. With that guaranteed we looked at the logistics of it and we saw we had time to do it because we were having two days off from the tour. So, we said: 'OK that's cool!'
The first studio we went to was dreadful. We set everything up and started recording but after half an hour we realised that the guy who was engineering wasn't up to it.
We thought, 'This guy is not happening, let's go somewhere else.'.
Our manager, Leigh, very hurriedly booked another studio, which happened to be the studio where we recorded our album, but because of the mess in the other studio we'd lost a lot of time and we didn't get started until six o'clock in the evening. Then we stayed up the whole night to finish it and in the end we only got three hours sleep and gave the worst gig of the tour the next evening.
Afterwards Björk did new vocals for the track. It was kind of funny because first we fitted our music around her voice and then she moved more towards us.

So, what's 1995 going to be like for you?

Skin: Since the tour we've been sorting out things with a new drummer and getting ready for more touring. The album's out in September and then, hopefully, it's more touring.

trickster who keeps the world alive and kicking by stretching its boundaries and trying the patience of its inhabitants.

15 May 1995:

Tricky free-associates with six punches we've thrown at him

TRUTH

There's no such thing

RISK

Everything

INTENTION

To be joy

CURFEW

Suffering in silence

KNOCK-OUT

Any contender who wants a shot at the title

YEARN

For infinity

I'm Christ-like Gigantic!

GIGANTIC

Dancing About Buildings

The Black Dog arrived in 1987. Its members were among the pioneers of a regenerative dance sound who knew there was a universe of possibilities out there, and went to explore it. The songs they brought back from their voyages are startlingly beautiful and have gained them the respect of a whole new crew of audionauts.

Their recorded output is prolific. Three albums as The Black Dog - and numerous side-projects under pseudonyms - have allowed them to develop and refine their sound. It's a complicated and diverse blend of opposites encompassing crystalline techno rhythms and deconstructed jazz breaks. The mix is dense not heavy, a complicated mesh of sound vibrating against sound. Their morphing sculptures operate in space like finely-worked machinery. Overt meanings lie buried like archaeological remains. ideas of communication and metaphysical movement ripple beneath the liquid surfaces.

The members of Black Dog are elusive, conducting interviews by phone or using the Internet. They prefer to communicate thought and music without unnecessary distractions.

But their computer went down, so...No interface. Direct. The ghosts in the machine on this occasion were Andy Turner and Ed Handley.

They met at school, moved to London and met up with Ken Downie. Ed had been producing some hip-hop on equipment at home. Andy was DJing.

Ed: Well I know that Andy and me grew up listening to hip-hop. For a while I didn't listen to anything else really. When hip-hop started to relate to jazz more, that influenced me to go out and find some of the originals myself. I was never really into jazz as a youngster.

Andy: There was always a search for breaks and that pushed us in this direction.

Ed: Searching for beats you go through so many old jazz records that you start to like the music.

Andy: (Laughs)

Ed: As well as the beats.

Andy explained how their partnership worked: "Usually we get ideas on our own and see what emerges when they're put together.". In that sense The Black Dog is a collective rather than a group. Each individual is accountable for what they do but not part of any hierarchical structure. Everyone's contribution becomes amended and re-combined in new forms by the work of their partners. The result is an organic process of selection and has always shaped their music.

Ed: You develop together, we've been in Black Dog for seven years, so there's a lot of common ground. If you were doing something that people didn't like then maybe it wouldn't make it onto the albums. That doesn't mean it wouldn't get released though, it would just mean that someone didn't like that track, there was no voting structure or anything like that. We all started making music because it was a way of channelling energies that we've got...whatever sort of energies they may be. So partly it's for selfish reasons that you make music, you enjoy it. We're not influenced by musical fashions or how much money you can make.

Andy: I think our personalities are so strongly involved in the music that a cohesive sound happens naturally if it's honest music. Sometimes it's possible to sit down

and think 'I'm going to write something like this today', and that won't be representative of exactly you, yourself. But we always write fairly honestly and what we write we enjoy. Writing music is the best form of meditation for me. And lack of sleep.

The records are emotional in a way that only machine-driven music can be. The tracks are expansive backgrounds for feeling. Emotion out here is a matter of precisely-controlled nuances. The effect is subtle but always there. They concentrate on the ability of music to communicate.

Ed: It's important that it's always been people with these things at their fingertips. It was the sound of people making discoveries. Even just the little discovery that you can be happy doing something, if that something is making music it's got to show.

Andy: There was always this attitude of hope. It couldn't be taken away.

Ed: I feel very hopeful sometimes listening to music. This type of music in particular, electronic music over the last few years, it all seems quite hopeful. About something - I don't know what though.

Andy: Maybe it's just the fact that there are people who only write music they want to hear themselves. Maybe that's the mood people want to hear at the moment.

Their collaborations with Björk began when they re-mixed 'Come To Me' and 'The Anchor Song' from 'Debut'. They emphasised a darker element in the songs adding analogue rhythm-beds and granular textures. This time they were more involved, co-writing and remixing two tracks, 'Charlene' and 'Sweet Intuition'.

Andy: We met her last Friday and she said we were happy but in a quiet, private way. I think she's said that about the English in general though. We are happy, but we're not going to shout about it, just grin a bit! As far as our music is concerned we don't restrict ourselves to a certain style. She's the same and that's one of the best things about her. She's very interested in working with different people and trying things out. Not everything we've done has worked, it's just a really good feeling to know that we can experiment like that.

Ed: Often when you're writing about someone or something you don't actually write about them. You write about their reflection in you. It's not taking something, but finding a way to express something you've been given. To keep it interesting and original we're always searching around for new forms and ideas. Mistakes included.

Andy: I think we worked quite well together, it had a lot to do with being satisfied with an idea once you've got it and not constantly producing that until there's none of the original energy left. You've killed it.

If it's good then leave it alone?

Andy: It's something I'm trying to learn but it's very tempting to always think you can make it a little bit better.

Ed: Always with music there's an aspect of it that goes beyond personality. That isn't a reflection of the musician. You can indulge yourself to the point of losing personality. Then you have the possibility of generating a more universal music. Something that's not just relevant to you. In performance you can lose your ego and lose your personality, it's rare but it can happen. The real value of music is that it's something that makes you happy. There are so many distractions from the simple art of doing and being happy doing.

Andy: You can reach a point where you don't think. The proper ideas are from the moment when you lose your analytical self and the music comes straight through you. Once you've reached the centre of what it is you're trying to do you can come back out. I don't think I've reached the centre and I'm not ready to come back out yet.

Do you set up difficult situations to provoke something unusual?

Andy: In life in general? Yes, I do.

Ed: When you're feeling brave enough!

Andy: I like to combine things that you would never think would go together and to make something new and unique occur. The combination of elements gives another dimension to the work. It's more like a jigsaw than layers of parts. Completing the piece is like resolving that difficulty.

Black Dog's music already reinforces the value of music as an alternative reality that is available to the majority of people. Will advances in technology increase the musician's ability to create and populate spaces?

Andy: This will be more relevant in a few years time. There's a lot of interesting research being done.

Ed: In a way the technology is nearly there already. You can model an object in minute detail, it's just that the computers can't display it in real-time. The technology isn't available to everyone. But you can still go into an image and fly around, you just have to use your imagination rather than a computer.

Andy: Although we're very interested in creating spaces, it can be very frustrating. The potential of machinery is becoming greater and greater. The individual is just going to have to be more focused on what they want to do. You can't just throw yourself into it as there are too many possibilities. Even with music at some point you just have to say, 'Enough!'.

Ed: We've talked about having some sort of computer-generated environment built in on the next album. There are so many elements that need expanding though. Like chaotic elements for instance. I'd like things to happen autonomously and unpredictably. It happens in music a lot. That's all missing from computer-generated environments these days.

What about automated processes in music?

Andy: There's a machine, like Bach. Someone wrote an equation that analysed his writing habits and works out plausible variations.

Bach in a box?

Andy: It's in a museum. Apparently it's writing songs until 2020 and then it will have exhausted the possibilities.

What's The Black Dog equation?

Both: Freestyle!

Andy: I don't know, Ed Handley, Andy Turner and Ken Downie.

Ed: We are the ultimate description of our own music... or not.

The facts don't matter anyway,
you've just got to listen

Lilies Feel Obsolete. Lager Feeds Optimism. Love Falls
Lawmen Fear Onanists. Lack, Fail, Overcome. Long Finge
Late, Fast, Organic. Light Feathers Orbit. Luck Flows On,
Fly Overhead. Language Feels Obsolete. Lager Feeds
Lust Fathers Omnipotence. Lodgers Fear Onanists. Lick, F
Levitating Freaks Overdose. Lazy, Fast, Organic. Lumin
Locals Favour Ohms. Limbs Fly Overhead. Language Fear
Liquidating Five Others. Lust Fakes Omnipotence. Lodger
Loose Firms Overlap. Levitating Foetuses Overdose. La
On. Luxury Finds Officers. Locals Flaw Ohms. Limbs F
Offenders. Logic Falters Often. Liquidating Five Octaves.
Orange. Lost Films Outlawed. Loose Firms Occlude. Lev
Females Overbear. Lilt Flies Off. Luxury Finds Otters. Loc
Low Frees Offenders. Low Falters Often. Low Five Octa
Orange. Low Films Outlawed. Low Firms Occlude. Low Fo
Low Flies Off. Low Finds Otters. Low Flaw Odes. Low F
Offenders. Low Frequency Often. Low Frequency Octa
Low, Frequency, Orange. Low Frequency Outlawed. Low Fr
Oaf. Low Frequency Overbear. Low Frequency Off. Low
Obscene. Low Frequency Oscillation. Low Frequency Oscill
Low Frequency Oscillation. Low Frequency Oscillation
Low Frequency Oscillation. Low Frequency Oscillation
Low Frequency Oscillation. Low Frequency Oscillation

How come you wrote 'I Go Humble' with Björk?

"She asked us to work with her when she was doing 'Debut', but we were busy doing other things so it never came to it. Then last year we sent her a demo with our new stuff and told her she was free to use whatever she liked on the demo. She liked one of the songs so we sent her a tape to work with.".

...it means Low Frequency Oscillation. It means Leeds boys Gez Varley and Mark Bell. For many, they represent the definitive Warp sound. Their eponymously-titled debut single recorded and produced in Mark's bedroom reached the UK Top 20, with sales of 120,000. And made Warp, their label, famous in the world of Techno. Their only album to date, 'Frequencies', is a classic: delicate, intricate. With some speaker-punishing bass. According to Warp, LFO are currently choosing from hundreds of tracks to put together their long-awaited second album, 'Advance'.

Just like that? You didn't meet her?

"No..."

What do you think of the result?

"We haven't heard it yet.".

Have you been tied up?

"Yes, finishing our new album.".

And what's new?

"New sounds, new songs..."

Well, I guess that's all for now...

"Why not?".

The Birth of NovaBjörk

A tale in the old style of Science Fiction. For the children of NuWorld.

i

This is the story of an old composer, whose identity must remain a secret for his own safety. He lived by himself on the outskirts of NeoPolis and was ignored by his fellow pholk. Partly because they hardly knew of his existence and partly because the pholk didn't care.

The composer's house was of the Ol'World, that is, the world before the Great Deconstruction. Buildings were organic before NuWorld. Sometimes the house seemed just like a living creature, its walls were uneven, its windows really opened, and it had a crooked roof. All forbidden now of course.

But the composer didn't mind living in such poor circumstances. He had no thought for anything except his beloved music. All he asked in life was to be able to create enough compositions to feed the starving MuBots hidden in his cellar.

Every morning the old man would stroll around his vast garden, clutching in his gnarled old hands a fat fountain pen and a book of music sheets. Whenever he heard birdsong, he would stop and scribble it down in Notes. The sacred musical symbols of old which he knew by heart. He understood the mysterious nature of those ancient black dots, and how they could translate the birds' twitterings into the music of human emotions.

One morning the composer stood beneath the weeping willow, his mind focused.

He turned his trained ears in as many directions as there are in a forest.

He became aware of something new in the air.

Whatever It was, It had silenced the birds. They were flitting backwards and forwards with straw in their beaks, but not one was singing.

"This is most odd", he thought to himself. "Spring is months away but the birds are behaving as if it's arrived!".

It was unlikely there could have been a polar shift the night before without him being aware of it. And even if there had been, he'd expect the birds to sing more than usual not less. He knew something was wrong.

As they all seemed to be flying in the same direction, the old man decided to follow them. Perhaps they would lead to the source of the mystery.

He reached a clearing, where the ground was black with birds of all shapes and sizes. He picked his way through the dark carpet of shining wings and tails, taking

care not to tread on a single creature. Finally the composer arrived at the centre of the clearing, where the frenzied birds crawled thickest.

He couldn't believe his eyes.

What the birds had unearthed with their pecking and picking was a young girl.

ii

Back at the house, the old man laid the girl gently on the kitchen table. She showed no signs of life; her limbs hung limply from her body, and her face was deathly pale.

But the composer was not the sort of man to give up easily. Since there was no visible injury, the problem had to be internal. A quick inspection with his X-ray glasses revealed that all her organs were severely damaged.

Fortunately he was a skilled organist.

The composer gathered together instruments from the Ol'World and the Nu. With sure hands he placed harp strings, microchips, pieces of brass, tiny transistors and other Energies inside the girl's body.

Once he was happy with his handiwork, the old man brought a sacred Ol'World ointment from the attic. He started to rub life back into her cold little limbs. He was old-fashioned enough to believe that ointments and powdered plants have more healing powers than our DocBots.

As he waited for the medicine to take effect the composer wondered where she could possibly have come from. The girl's coal-black hair, freckled cheeks, and slanted brown eyes were not of his world, that was for sure.

"What is she doing here?" the composer asked himself. "She radiates feelings most of us have long forgotten.".

Time passed and the girl healed. Slowly the blood started to colour her face and warm her body, until on the seventh day of the seventh week she woke up.

iii

Soon the girl was strong enough to tell the composer her strange story.

Her name was Björk. At the time of the Deconstruction she'd been walking over a bridge in a forgotten metropolis called NuYokCitti. Heading into its heart to set things right. She was not alone: in her entourage was an army of polar bears led by a bear-king called WhiteHeat.

The girl had forged an alliance with this mighty animal when she was just an infant.

WhiteHeat had drifted on an ice floe onto the shores of her native country, IceLand. He was not welcome there. The inhabitants feared the gigantic bears, who were usually hungry after a long journey on the open seas. They were a threat to the livestock. As soon as the girl's countrymen spotted WhiteHeat, they set off to kill him, armed with guns, nets and spears.

They hunted the polar bear high and low and he ran far and wide, until fatigue finally overcame him. Then he simply lay down on the shore awaiting his fate. But it was not time for him to die yet. There was a house nearby, with an open window. Inside lay a baby girl in her cradle, and when the groans of the defeated bear-king reached her tiny ears she began to cry. And her voice touched a chord deep within each hunter. It was so rich and so haunting that it seemed impossible to believe it was a new-born baby's. It distracted the IceLanders from their hunt, and WhiteHeat escaped.

He dived into the ocean and swam as hard as he could until he reached his kingdom on the GreenLand glacier. But he never forgot the baby girl who'd saved his life. From then on, the bear-king came to the girl's assistance whenever she needed help.

The composer was deeply moved by the girl's story. He knew now that she was a survivor. She may have appeared to crumble at the time of the Deconstruction, but she had kept the spark of life alive, safe inside herself. There was no doubt that she had survived because of her alliance with WhiteHeat, and the powers of Nature which he embodied. Sadly, WhiteHeat himself had perished along with virtually every other species in the Aftermath.

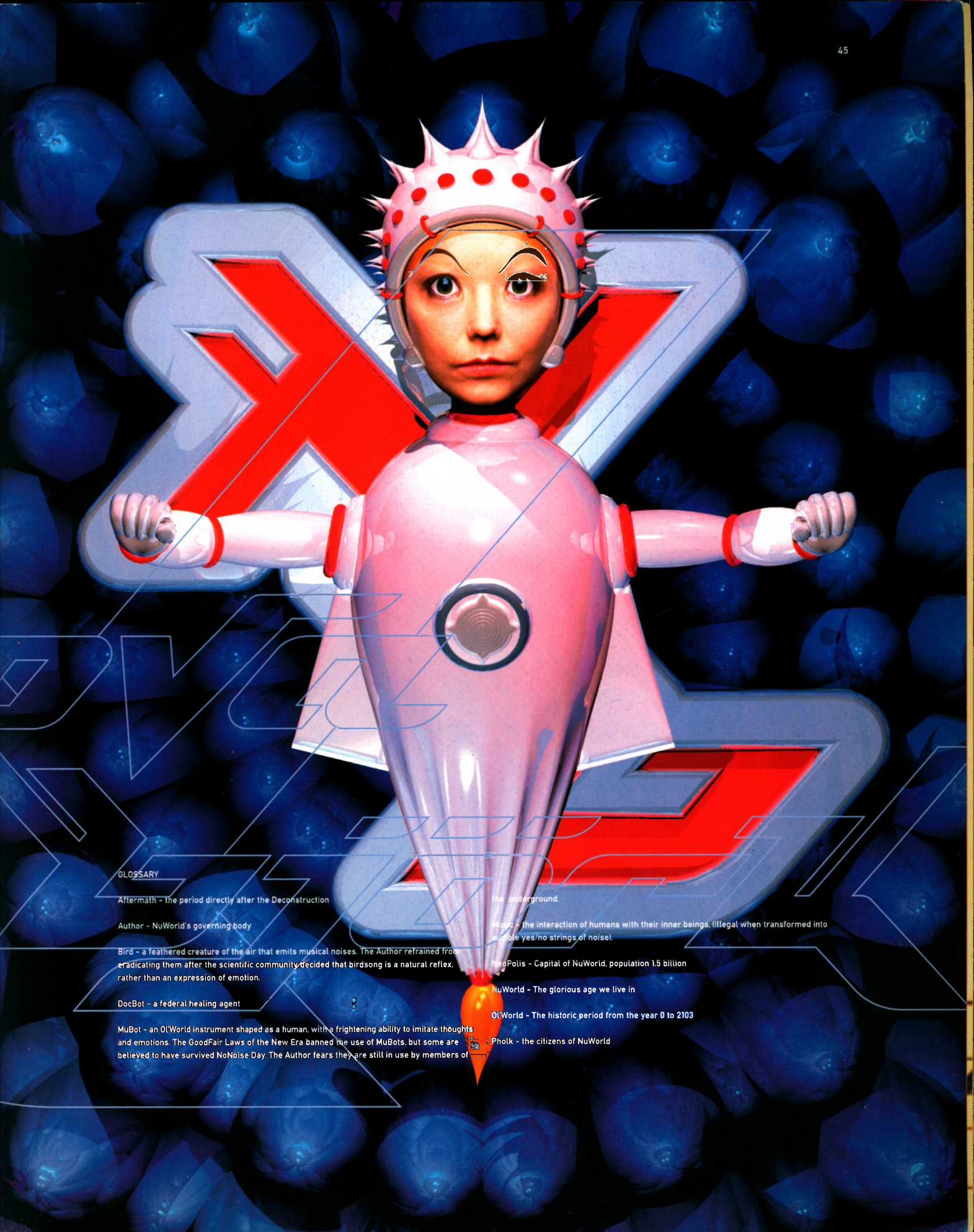
The composer was sure now that the girl should go on doing what she did best, fighting for the Good in Nature and Man. To equip her for her task in these changed and difficult times, the old man built a kind of armour for her from the body of an antique pink Kadillack. He copied it from a tattered old manuscript which had been in his family for centuries - The Saga of NovaBoy.

iv

So if you ever hear what sounds like thunder rumbling in the distance, but then it turns into a mighty harmony of Music, Emotions and Will, you can be sure it's NovaBjörk. She'll be flying high above you on her way to make the world a better place. If you listen closely, you'll hear this message resounding in her wake:

IN MY WORLD OF SOUND, WHAT I FIGHT FOR IS A SOUND WORLD.
THE MESSAGE OF MY MEDIUM:
"LISTEN TO ALL ORGANISMS!".
"LISTEN TO EVERY HEARTBEAT!".
SOMETIMES FOR YOU MY MESSAGE IN THIS TECHNO-ORGANIC NOISE:
"FREE ALWAYS ONE.".
"LOVE BODY.".
"BE COURAGEOUS IN A SOCIETY THAT SEES NO VALUE IN DESIRE.".

And so it goes on, without end...



GLOSSARY

Aftermath - the period directly after the Deconstruction

Author - NuWorld's governing body

Bird - a feathered creature of the air that emits musical noises. The Author refrained from eradicating them after the scientific community decided that birdsong is a natural reflex, rather than an expression of emotion.

DocBot - a federal healing agent

MuBot - an Ol'World instrument shaped as a human, with a frightening ability to imitate thoughts and emotions. The GoodFair Laws of the New Era banned the use of MuBots, but some are believed to have survived NoNoise Day. The Author fears they are still in use by members of the underground.

Music - the interaction of humans with their inner beings. (illegal when transformed into audible yes/no strings of noise).

NeoPolis - Capital of NuWorld, population 1.5 billion

NuWorld - The glorious age we live in

Ol'World - The historic period from the year 0 to 2103

Pholk - the citizens of NuWorld

When the disco version of the theme from '2001' hit the charts in 1973, it was to the delight of dancing bodies everywhere, in fact, just about everyone but the man responsible for it.

Eumir Deodato,

the Brazilian composer and manager, had just embarked on a love affair with the real passion in his life.

To add to his misfortune, it seemed that everything this Midas touched turned platinum. While Kool & the Gang celebrated with 'Celebration', the song Deodato produced for them, the man himself was not celebrating. The Stock Exchange was always on his mind, and the bitter fact he wasn't a player in the game gnawed at his soul.

At least, such is the picture he paints of himself when Sjón meets him at the Holiday Inn hotel. Deodato is in London for a rare music job, a two-day recording session with Björk and a 20-piece orchestra.

But he's reluctant to talk about that. He explains excitedly how the previous day he'd decided (in defiance of all logic and reason) to double his shares in a company he'd bought into only days earlier, now under threat from new buyers. He'd stayed up all night to await the outcome of his move, seriously considering delaying his flight. Then he'd received news that his irrationality had paid off, and boarded the London plane just minutes before take-off.

Even if you understand very little of the stock exchange lingo, you have to admire the man's dedication. Obsession is, after all, the mother of art.

Still, Sjón managed to coax some conversation from Deodato that wasn't about the Stock Market, even if sometimes it was hard to tell who was interviewing whom.

Deodato on Coffee

"You'll have to excuse me. I've got jet lag. I really need coffee but they don't know how to make it here. When I came here this morning I got the worst cup of coffee I've ever had in my life. I'm not saying they don't know how to make good coffee in this country - I've had nice coffee in England. But I'll stick to the tea here.".

Deodato on the Past

"I grew up with all those guys in Rio. I worked with Antonio Carlos Jobim for years: we once did a movie-score here in England. It was for a movie called The Adventurers, directed by Lewis Gilbert. We worked on it for six months and it was driving Jobim mad. He didn't like being told what to do. He wanted to write his songs as usual, and I don't blame him. Anyway, it was left to me to finish it off, so I did. It was recorded up in Sheffield with a symphony orchestra and it was crazy. I had to fight for it not to be too obvious, too Mickey Mouse and all that. They hadn't a clue what they were doing.

"Well, I'm talking too much, you must have some questions?".

Tell me about your work with Milton Nascimento...

"That was way back! It's a long, long story..."

The 'Travezia' single you did with him was the reason that Björk wanted to work with you so much...

"Really?".

That's what she told me. Does it surprise you she relates to that period in your music?

"It doesn't surprise me that she knew of it, because it's such a well-known piece. When I think of her music I do find it surprising that she can relate to something that is so different to what she does. But if you look closely at her material and when you've seen how she works, you know she relates to all sorts of areas in music. What she does is she takes the reference points and when she's worked with them they become totally hers. I've got nothing but praise for her.".

Then tell me about Milton Nascimento and 'Travezia'...

"You sound like you're not from England".

I'm from Iceland...

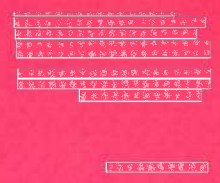
"Reykjavik?".

Yes...

"Somebody said to me that Björk has some Eskimo blood in her. I don't buy it myself. There are no Eskimos in Iceland, not that I know of..."

Deodato on Working with Björk

"You know, I don't like doing music anymore. It has to be something very special. I was in Japan when I got the call from her. I was told that someone with an unpronounceable name and a strange accent had called. So I didn't know who it was until later when she got in contact again and asked me to work with her. She was in the Bahamas and she told me all about her singing on the beach which I found interesting. Although I'm not sure that was such a good idea, I think she got a bad cold there. The Bahamas aren't necessarily that warm in February. They have a cold wind there. I should know, because I used to moor my boat there.



Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1942, Eumir Deodato was touring Brazil with his own orchestra at 17 and by the age of 20 writing for some of his country's most popular artists, including Antonio Carlos Jobim. In the late Sixties he moved to the US, where the Brazilian sound was being popularised by the likes of Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley. At first Deodato arranged and composed for Brazilian artists, such as Milton Nascimento, Marcos Valle and Astrud Gilberto. During the Seventies his name appears in the credits of LPs by George Benson, Stanley Turrentine, Bob James, Freddie Hubbard and Chicago, to name but a few. Not to mention his solo successes, notably 'Super Strut', '2001', 'Night Cruiser' and 'Whistle Stop'. His last solo album came out in 1990. In his spare time he plays the Stock Market.

the Stock Market. He was forced to abandon telephone, graphs and financial papers and hit the road for several years with his band.

"Once when I'd been out all night in severe weather, and was finally coming in to the port of Paradise Island, we had to steer past these rocks. We were heading straight for them when the deck hand tells me: 'Hey boss, the tiller came off!'. And he shows me the tiller in his hand. Somehow we managed to avoid the rocks, using this manual steering, which we had to open up with screws. There's no time to get emotional in a situation like that. You need discipline.

"Well, anyway, I went out and got Björk's records, 'Debut', and all the stuff with The Sugarcubes, and I was blown away. I hadn't thought it was possible to do what Björk was doing to that standard. There's no one like her around. She's the first to do what she does and get away with it.

"I also knew Corki Hale, the harpist she worked with on 'Debut'. I've worked with Corki, and I recognised her playing in 'Like Someone In Love' after a couple of seconds. Corki and her husband are old friends of mine. She's married to Mike Stoller, who co-wrote all the Presley songs with Jerry Leiber.

"Then when Björk sent me the pieces she wanted me to work on, 'Hyber-ballad' and 'Isobel', that was enough for me. I was amazed!

"We finished doing the strings for the songs in less than three hours. We had the musicians for another session so we decided to give them a break and Björk told me of a song she was working on in her head, called 'You've Been Flirting'. It was like an Icelandic folk song, so we worked out the arrangement and I put it on paper. When the musicians came back, we recorded the music and she sang it live in the studio. It's one of the best songs on the album.

"What's your favourite song on the album?".

At the moment it's 'Isobel', but I wrote the lyrics so I'm probably biased...

"You did? Where did you get the idea from?".

Björk just filled me up with ideas and images, the atmosphere. It had to be romantic in the old sense of the word, dark and passionate. And she came up with this name Isobel which I thought was a great name for a romantic character.

"Isobel is an unusual name. Usually you see Isabelle. Do you know where she got the name from?".

No...

"It's the name of the lady who contracted the musicians.".

It is?

"Yes. She's a very handsome woman. Björk didn't tell you about her?".

No, but I started on the lyrics after you did the strings, and it helped me a lot. The arrangement is very visual. It was like I'd landed in a dark forest, or a city in a blackout...

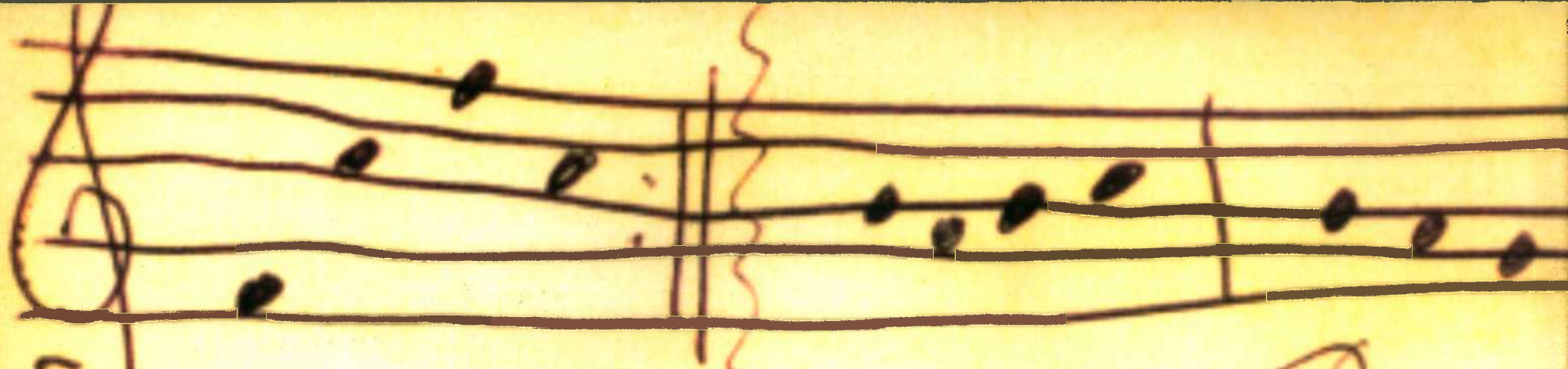
"It's nice of you say that, but it was really simple. I told Björk there wasn't much more I could add to it, that it was pretty much complete. All I could do was maybe give the song some colour, a little extra dimension. Perhaps I managed to achieve that, if you were imagining those different things...

"Did you notice I wrote this one line with a wrong note in it?".

No?

"There's one wrong note on purpose in the song. Instead of a B-minor chord I wrote a C. If you look at the line it's very simple. The first three bars are normal, but then it changes and there's a C in there. I was thinking of the times when musicians do an honest mistake and how that's what makes their performance interesting and alive. So I decided to experiment with that concept but doing it on purpose, and it worked. It's going to bother a lot of people and make them think 'What happened? The orchestra can't possibly have played just one wrong note, but at the same time it doesn't sound as if it's done on purpose...'

"There's a lot of little things like that if you listen out for them.".



lunch

Lenardi

a relationship song

settle for nothing le
the object of your d

n to doubt

not gonna work out

is for life

"... what are you up t
I reply ." don't d
and listen!"

Stemming · bolero (bo

at ferdost inn undirmedvitind
I like this (resonance)
I don't recognize myself
this is very interesting
cover me

while I tiptoe into the fighting
tease the crack in me
with poetry
have fertility : up there
while I crawl into the unknown

cover me
I'm going hunting for mysteries

cover me
I'm going to proof the impossible really exists
and later we can enjoy it
to gether
and if the rest of the
world don't believe it
they don't know what they're missing

n men

dangerous
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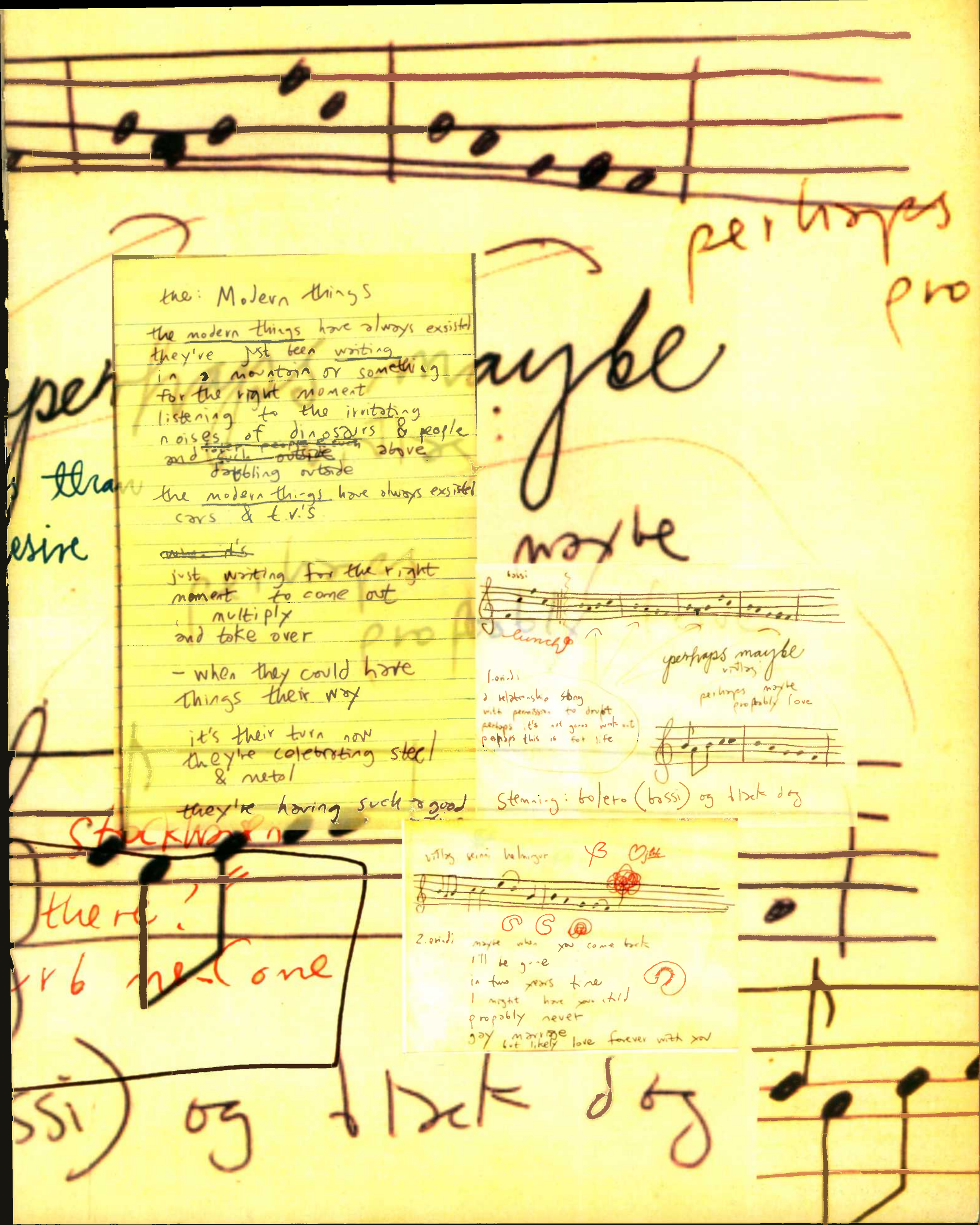

perhaps
pro
maybe
maybe
the: Modern things
the modern things have always exsisted
they're just been waiting
in a mountain or something
for the right moment
listening to the irritating
noises of dinosaurs & people
above
dabbling outside
the modern things have always exsisted
cars & t.v.'s
just waiting for the right
moment to come out
multiply
and take over
- when they could have
things their way
it's their turn now
they're celebrating steel
& metal
they're having such a good
bassi
lunch
perhaps maybe
villag
perhaps maybe
probably love
1. erindi
a relationship song
with permission to doubt
perhaps it's not gonna work out
perhaps this is for life
Stemning: bolero (bassi) og black dog
villag seinni helmingur
2. erindi maybe when you come back
I'll be gone
in two years time
I might have your child
propably never
gay marriage
but likely love forever with you
there?
rb me-Come
ssi) og black dog

AN ARMY OF ME

and if you'll moan once more
time — you'll meet
an army of me

2 you're allright! There's nothing wrong
~~stop sulking~~ and get to work

stand up baby
you've got to manage
I ~~don't~~ won't sympathize
anymore
you're worse than Morrissey

reliant

you're a coward
lazy
expect so much
~~but giving a~~

self-suffissience please
you've got have to manage
you can't blame them

no I wont nurse you

you're on your own now
we won't ~~safe~~ you

3 your rescue squad
is too exhausted I go through all
before you wak
So I can feel
to be safe up

be

In two years

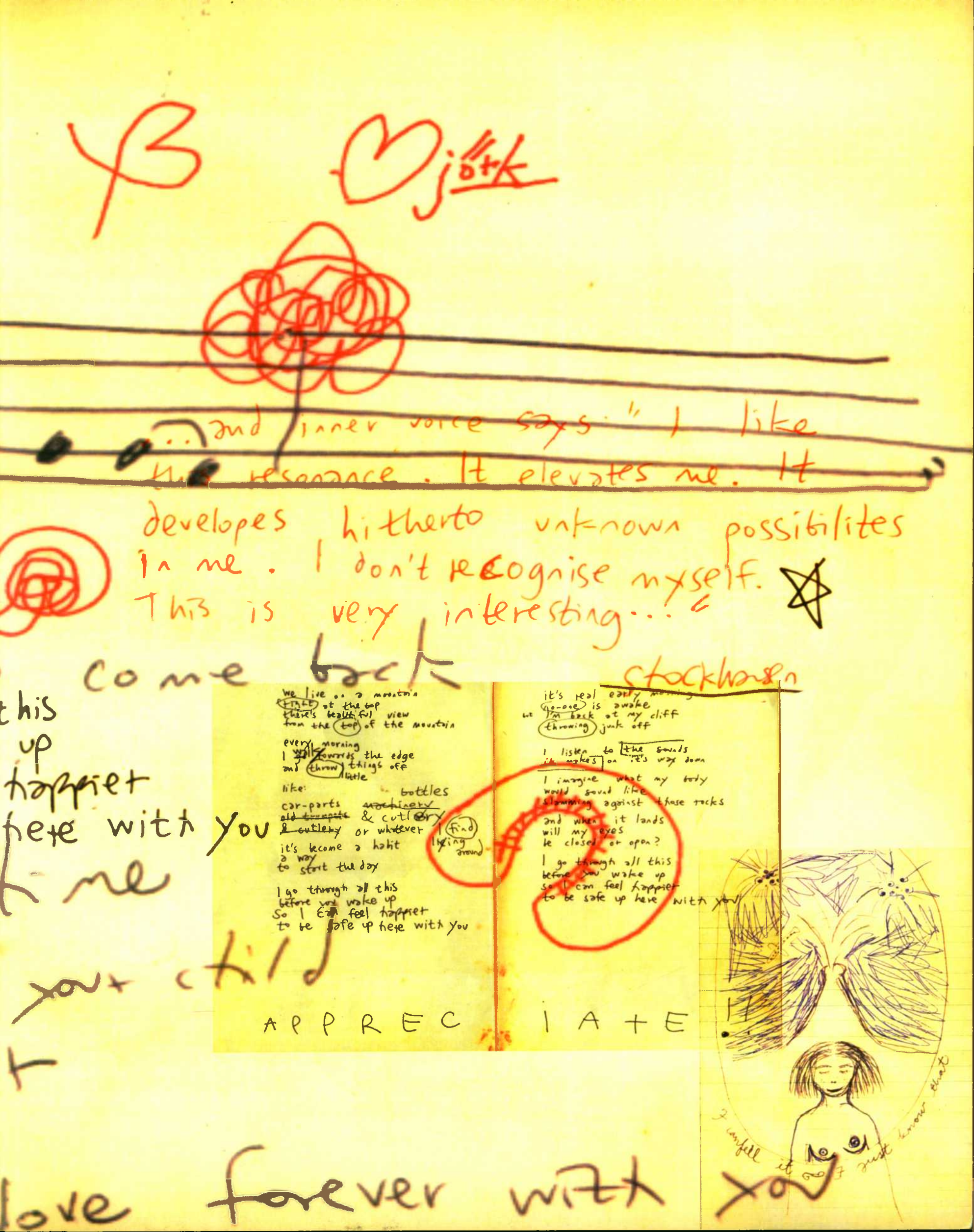
I might have
propably neve
gay marriage

villag

2. eriadi

3

♡ jotk



...and inner voice says: "I like the resonance. It elevates me. It developes hitherto unknown possibilites in me. I don't recognise myself. This is very interesting..."
come back
stockhausen
this
up
happier
here with you
me
your child
love forever with you
we live on a mountain
right at the top
there's beautiful view
from the top of the mountain
every morning
I walk towards the edge
and throw things off
little
like:
car-parts ~~machinery~~ bottles
~~old trumpets~~ & cutlery
~~& cutlery~~ or whatever I find lying around
it's become a habit
a way
to start the day
I go through all this
before you wake up
So I can feel happier
to be safe up here with you
it's real early morning
no-one is awake
but I'm back at my cliff
throwing junk off
I listen to the sounds
it makes on it's way down
I imagine what my body
would sound like
slamming against those rocks
and when it lands
will my eyes
be closed or open?
I go through all this
before you wake up
so I can feel happier
to be safe up here with you
APPRECIATE
I can fell it
I just know that

When Sjón arrives at the Delfina Arts Trust cafe, favourite haunt of the

Brodsky Quartet,

it's with all sorts of preconceived ideas of what to expect from a group of serious classical musicians.

No doubt they'd be pale (all that rehearsing in stuffy rooms), perhaps a little maladjusted (from sacrificing all social contact to achieve the state of virtuoso) and unused to speaking (after long hours of playing).

But the Brodskys are clearly in celebratory mood. it's Holly's first day out. Holly being the 12-day-old daughter of Jacqueline Thomas (cello) and Paul Cassidy (viola). And the football team they support, Middlesborough, has made it into the Premier League. After the photo session the quartet sign a copy of their album 'Brodsky Unlimited' for Middlesborough's manager.

The album's cover shot certainly isn't your average depiction of a string quartet. Paul, Jacqueline, Ian Belton (violin) and Michael Thomas (violin) pose as a gang of bikers in leather jackets, jeans and white T-shirts. Certainly classic post-war imagery, but classical?

By now, Sjón is thinking of his interviewees as "The Brodskys" - a sure sign that his pop brain is doing its best to rationalise this encounter with a group of classically-trained musicians. But when it comes to it, it's left to Paul Cassidy to save the bigot's day: Ian and Michael have to rush off to other appointments, and Jacqueline is busy with little Holly.

Nevertheless, the undeserving reporter not only gets a potted history of the Brodsky Quartet, and their work with Björk, but a plate of delicious fish stew and a glass of beer too!

We went into the listening room, listened to one complete take of the song, and everyone looked at each other and said SPOOKY

Good music is good music

(Fish on the table, tape rolling.) So where does the Brodsky Quartet come from?

"Well, the quartet started in Middlesborough. Unfortunately you're talking to the one person who hasn't been with the quartet for all the 23 years. The original four started when they were 11 years old, really because Michael and Jacqueline are brother and sister, and the other two only lived 200 yards away. I joined the quartet in 1981 so I'm just a beginner!

"Then subsequently I became Jacqueline's husband, and that's why I'm smiling all the time..."

(The beer arrives. Some prejudices linger in Sjón's brain as he asks the next question.) When I saw you all together, you looked more like a rock band than a string quartet...

"Maybe you just met us on a good day! I'm not going to pretend we don't have our problems because it is an incredibly difficult thing to keep a group together. But I think the fact the quartet survived the teenage years has made the bonds very strong - everyone knows the personality changes you go through between the ages of 12 and 24. Even though we still have our fights and so on, there's a very strong basis to the group, simply because we've gone through those difficult changes together.

"I don't know what you meant by saying 'like a rock band' but I think what makes a quartet such a strong thing is the fact there are four people. It's more like a group, a classic band, if you want. You don't find that in piano duos or trios. There's something about having four people that opens up the possibilities of interrelationships. If there are three people they tend to all become loners, whereas in a quartet there are infinite possibilities.".

You've established yourselves as one of the world's best classical quartets. What made you stray into the unholy arena of popular music, working with the likes of Elvis Costello and then Björk?

"Well, over the years we've managed to put a lot of people's backs up. In the Eighties we were given this terrible bloody label as being the "designer quartet". Simply because we refused to play in clothes that were archaic and - to put it frankly - demeaning to the artist. Those clothes hark back to the days when musicians did concerts in return for food, which is a ridiculous state of affairs!

"Early on in our career we looked for clothes that would look good and be easy to perform in. It's just not sensible - when you take 85 flights, like we did last year - to wear shirts that need ironing! So we built up this friendship with the Japanese designer Issey Miyake and he designed clothes for us, but all the media could do was say 'Ooh, they're the designer quartet!'.

"Our instinct was certainly always to listen to other forms of music and also to look at other types of art: painting, sculpture, fashion. I think we were brave to follow our instincts and not totally embrace the classical environment. We didn't bow down to it and do all the things that one is supposed to do to make it in that world.

"In doing the album 'The Juliet Letters' with Costello, we took a huge gamble. We got a lot of stick from the classical world, but I have to remind you that we met with big resistance from the pop press too! Basically, we all have to open up. It's very easy to be snobbish (and being an inverted snob is just as bad).

"Culture is alive! In Mozart's days they didn't play music written a hundred years before; they played the music that he was writing. Why has it suddenly changed now? It's as if we're regressing. Art must be alive: it has to be happening right now. You have to trust your own instincts and your own judgement: that's the only criteria I think there has to be. It doesn't mean that you accept everything that is around - that's a dead-end street - but as long as your standards are high and your judgement is good then you should do exactly what you want, because presumably that's going to give you the best results.".

(Fish disappearing, as are the prejudices. Almost.) But what is it about your background that made it easier for you to reach that conclusion than your contemporaries?

"One of the great gurus of quartet playing, Norbert Brainin from the Amadeus Quartet, once said that the most important thing for a quartet is that its individual members have the same background. And I think in our group we do. I come from Derry in Northern Ireland, which is on the same line of latitude as Middlesborough, and it's a similar kind of town.

"And all four of us were exposed to many different forms of music as children. We weren't brought up as classical musicians strictly. All my childhood was spent watching Top of the Pops; it wasn't until I was a teenager I got to know all the wonderful classical repertoire. So that could have something to do with it...

"But in a way what's more important to me is that we shouldn't strive to categorise everything: good music should stand on its own. Good music is good music, and a Björk song can stand next to a Schubert song. For me there's no difference, absolutely none.".

That brings us to the Brodsky Quartet's work with Björk...

"Björk is an exceptional artist, it's terribly exciting to have the chance to work with someone like her. She's taking pop music into a whole new dimension. She seems to be delving into all kinds of interesting sound-worlds. It's as if she's taken the "song" as a form, torn it up, and thrown all the bits in the air to rearrange them!

"When Björk asked us to arrange one of her songs, 'Hyper-ballad', it was something we'd secretly been waiting and hoping for. There was never a question of us not doing it. Yet at the same time, it was important to us that she wasn't thinking of it as the sort of process where we'd just do the arrangement and then she'd put the vocals on top later. We were eager to approach it from a collaborative sense. We loved the song and wanted the opportunity to work with it. Slow down the tempo here, exhilarate there, just little things like that. But you never know with an artist. You can guess, but until you've met them you don't know how they will react to your ideas.

"Our fears were dispelled the first time we met Björk. She came round to our house to talk over various possibilities for the song and she was very open and she wanted to work with us. As soon as we had met her it was signed, sealed, delivered as far as we were concerned.

"We spent a long time working with Björk: three or four days going through the song, trying different things, different sounds and everything like that. And it was exhilarating working with her. She's got a fantastic vocal technique. She was really able to change her voice and put in nuances that we classical musicians think are reserved for us.

"Amazingly enough, what we came out of the studio with in the end was one take. We went into the listening room, listened to one complete take of the song, and everyone looked at each other and said 'Spooky!'".

(Plate clean, prejudices gone, tape off.)

ALWAYS A DRUM

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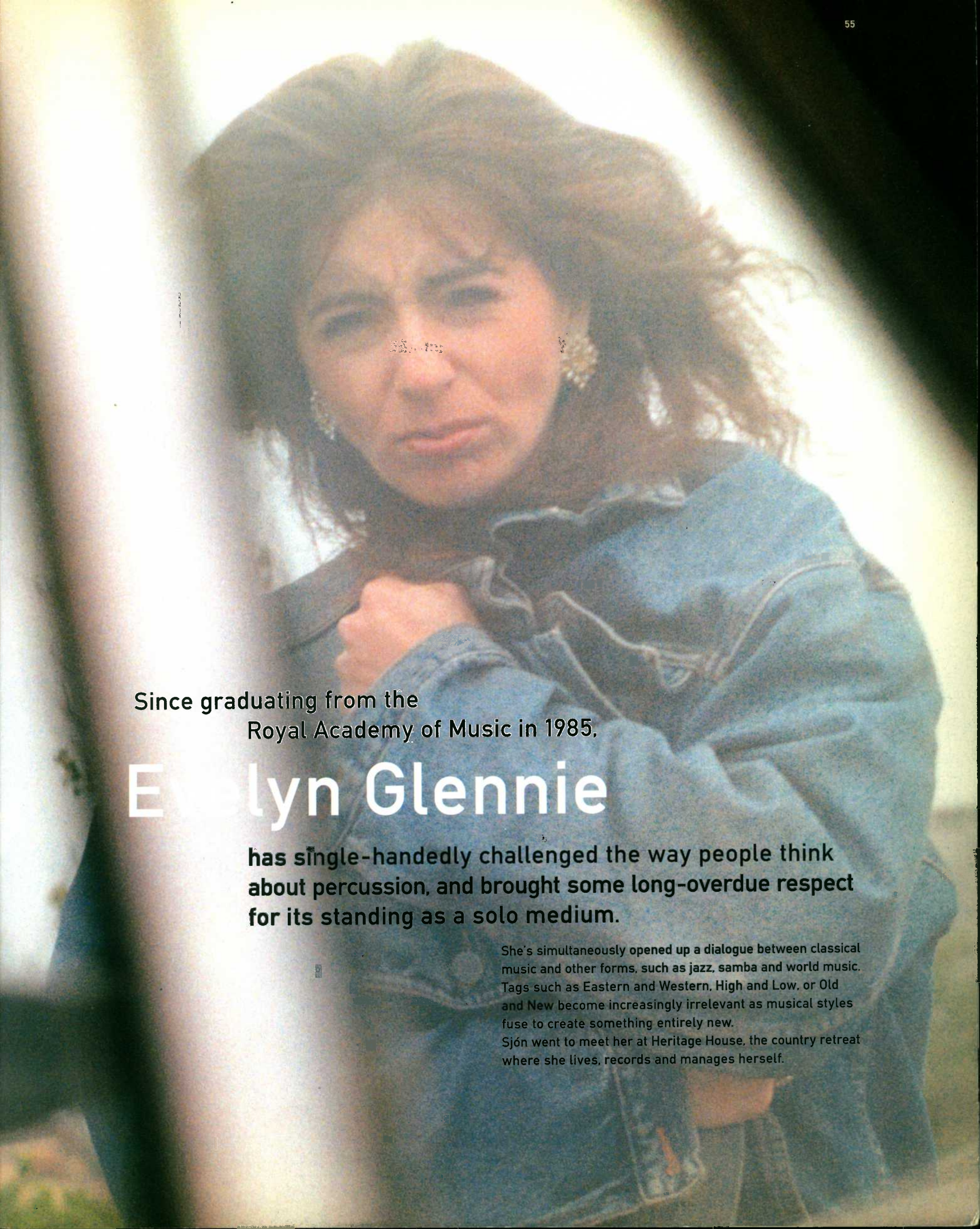
to grandmas



Since graduating from the Royal Academy of Music in 1985,

Evelyn Glennie

has single-handedly challenged the way people think about percussion, and brought some long-overdue respect for its standing as a solo medium.

She's simultaneously opened up a dialogue between classical music and other forms, such as jazz, samba and world music. Tags such as Eastern and Western, High and Low, or Old and New become increasingly irrelevant as musical styles fuse to create something entirely new.
Sjón went to meet her at Heritage House, the country retreat where she lives, records and manages herself.

Percussion doesn't seem to have a defined role in the Western classical tradition. Do you find that gives you more freedom to experiment?

"Absolutely. By its very nature, percussion encourages improvisation and experimentation. It's easy for a percussionist to launch into some Latin, jazz or funk, contemporary music or whatever. Since I went professional, I've directed all my energy and time into exploring the solo aspect of percussion and I've found it more and more difficult to categorise what I play. It just so happens that I'm promoted as a classical musician, but much of my repertoire doesn't fit in with that.".

Did percussion ever really have a place there?

"Well, most percussive music was written this century, and mostly in the 1950s. So it's not classical as such. Basically I have a general repertoire, another that's suitable for contemporary music festivals, one for 5-year-old kids, and so on. It can be adapted in all sorts of ways for different occasions. That's the beauty of it!

"What I like most is the way everyone can get involved, from little kids right through to grandmas. All sorts of people can participate: some instruments are extremely difficult, but some are very easy to play. Even someone who is very physically disabled, or severely mentally handicapped, could pick up a percussion instrument and play.

"Also, percussion's theatrical, which makes it good television - much more so than the violin or the clarinet for example. It's interesting talking about it, simply because there is so much to talk about.".

You feel that percussion has the capacity to break down social barriers?

"Yes. The more I travel, the more I learn how ineffective spoken language can be and what barriers it can create. It's the most simple thing of all, the simple drum. Wherever I go - and I've been with villagers in Venezuela, farmers in South Korea, city-dwellers in Scotland - there is always a drum there that links us. It's so wonderful to know that we all share that need of rhythm. And there are no class barriers at all - I think that's what is so important. It doesn't matter what colour your skin is, how old you are, whether you are rich or poor. All that's important is whether you have anything worth saying or not.

"Being a percussionist you come across some really great percussion players. They may not know what a treble clef is, or understand anything to do with musical notation, form and structure, yet they're phenomenal musicians. They might be street musicians, or those really traditional musicians you meet in Brazil or Japan. They can be amazing! Maybe it's the way they so specialise so much, or the instruments they play, or the type of music, but the level of complexity is extraordinary.".

Is that why you like to play different types of music? Is it a process of cross-fertilisation?

"One of my aims has been to work with interesting musicians. But I don't pigeon-hole them as pop musicians, ethnic musicians, jazz musicians or anything. For example I took part in a concert in Norwich earlier this year. It was a brand new piece for saxophone, percussion and piano, based on ancient Greek dances. It was in a kind of contemporary-jazz-spooky-traditional style, very difficult to actually define. Because the two main areas I concentrate on are concertos and recitals, it was really nice and a new experience for me. I could still be myself without compromising in any sort of way and yet work with different musicians.

"I feel I'm ready now for collaborations, but they have to be with the right person.".

How did the collaboration with Björk come about?

"I first heard from her when she asked me to do a song with her at the Brit Awards ceremony. But I couldn't do it at such short notice. Also, I think the people running it doubted it would work. Then she got in contact again and we met up here.".

How did you feel about working with her?

"It was very new for me to work with somebody from pop music, but I was completely into it because obviously I was familiar with her work. I knew Björk was very different to what was happening in pop so I felt quite happy about that.

"We just went into the studio and experimented. We started with a piece for marimba and voice. I had no idea how she worked, or even whether she could read music. So to begin with I'd pick some chords and ask her if it was within the range of her voice, and she would tell me what sort of mood she wanted the piece to be in. After that, it was really just knowing how she uses the words, whether she speaks them, whether she says them with sweetness or anger, and when she's changing mood. Once you've worked together for a while all that comes naturally. There's no need for words; you are so close to each other that you can't hide anything.

"Björk went round the studio picking up different instruments, she'd ask me what they were and how they sounded and I'd give her a sample. I played steel drum for a bit, and after a while she said she'd got an idea that could work with that sound. I came up with a pattern and she made the song up and we recorded it. Then we did another piece for clay drum and voice, in the same way: she liked the sound of the instrument, I did the pattern and she did the vocal.

"The last time we met up, I said 'Just listen to this!' and I showed her an instrument that was basically just car exhaust pipes laid on a frame. We recorded something with that.".

It sounds like she was the right person, an interesting musician to collaborate with?

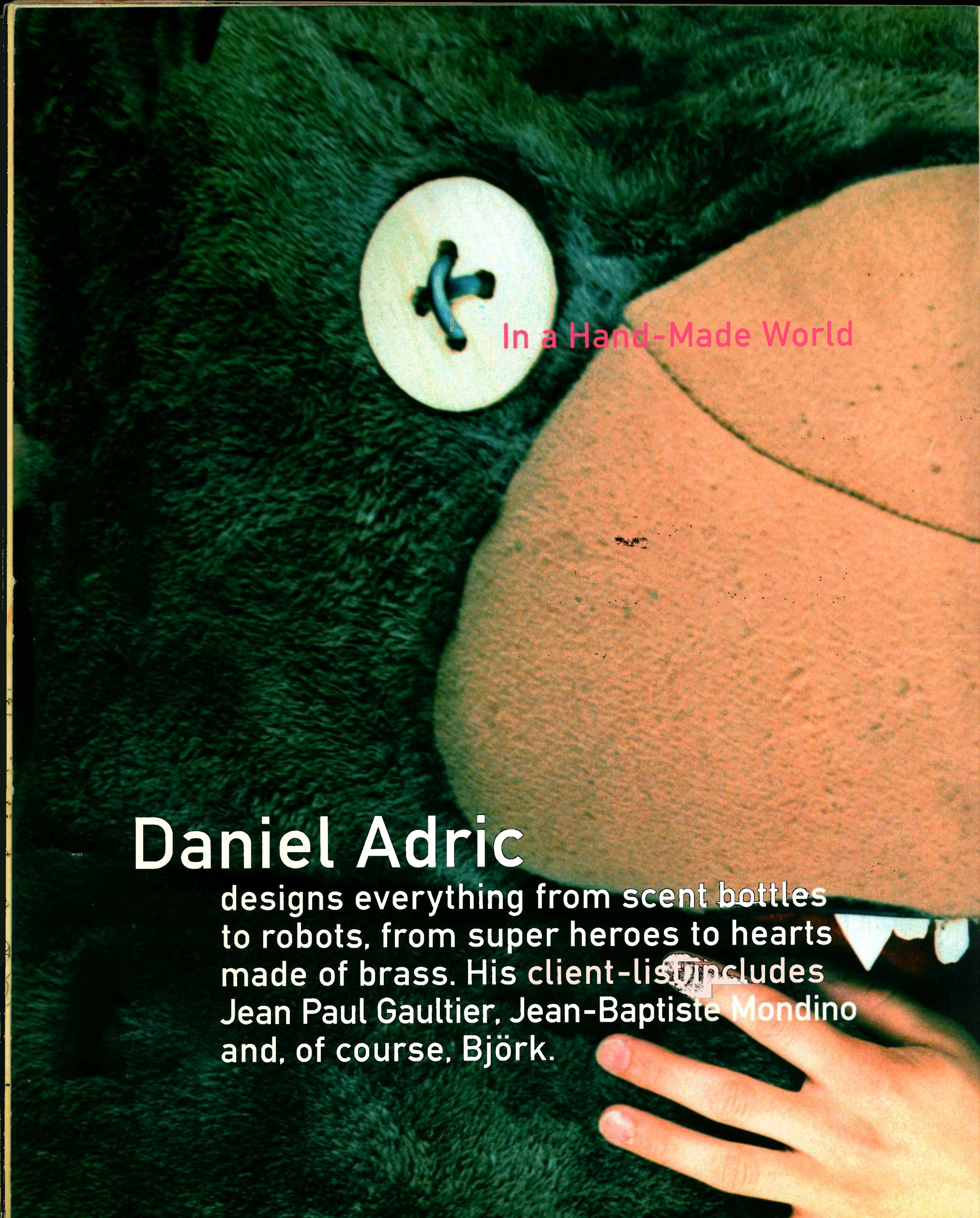
"What I like most of all about Björk is that she has a very instrumental voice. It's more like a musical instrument than a conventional singing voice. It can do all sorts of things. That's what's special about it for me, as a musician. You feel you can do anything and the voice will be able to cope.

"Another thing about Björk is that she can be acoustic if she wants: she doesn't need effects and things like that. I am entirely an acoustic player; it's very unusual for me to be miked up in any sort of way. Everything is acoustic, even if I'm playing to a hall of 3,000. So her voice suited me perfectly. That, and Björk's complete openness to ideas and things, the way she's ready to try absolutely anything and see what comes out of the experiment.

"It's been a very interesting collaboration for me. It's very easy to praise people insincerely, but I am absolutely sincere in what I say about Björk. Because at the end of the day you can only work with people who have something to give you in return, and she certainly has that something!".

Born and raised in Scotland, Evelyn Glennie started studying music at the age of nine. At the age of 12 she became interested in percussion and pursued a career as a soloist.
Her records include 'Rhythm Song', 'Light in Darkness' and 'Veni, Veni, Emmanuel', all on RCA.

ALWAYS



In a Hand-Made World

Daniel Adric

designs everything from scent bottles to robots, from super heroes to hearts made of brass. His client-list includes Jean Paul Gaultier, Jean-Baptiste Mondino and, of course, Björk.

The man who created the giant teddy bear for the 'Human Behaviour' video has now designed a series of unique sets as a backdrop to Björk's Post tour.

Fleeing his native Yugoslavia at the age of five, Adric forged his own surreal world, with nothing but his bare hands. This is his story.

ONCE UPON A TIME...

"My father met my mother at a Saturday-night dance. She agreed to meet him the following day, but then didn't show up. My father waited for hours and when he was sure she wasn't coming, he decided to leave the country. On the Monday he fled to Italy and booked into a hotel. Unfortunately the owner reported him and the next day he was sent back to Yugoslavia.

"He was imprisoned for two years for trying to escape. When he was free he went back to the ballroom. My mother was there dancing and he went up to her and asked why she hadn't come to meet him two years before, and if he was to ask her again would she show up this time around? My mother didn't recognise him at first, because his hair had been shaved off in prison. It was when Yul Brynner was at the height of his fame, and she thought my father looked a bit like him. She found him rather sweet and interesting and said 'Yes' again, and this time she kept her promise.

"My father is a Croat and my mother a Serb. Their families were opposed to their marriage, but they got married anyway and had me. They weren't happy living in a country where their love was not recognised and understood, so they left by the same route my father had taken two years earlier. It was still illegal to leave Yugoslavia. They had to go over wolf-traps and mines, and avoid armed guards under instruction to shoot everyone on sight. Because my father had bad memories of Italian hospitality, they carried on to France.

"I was left behind in Croatia with my grandparents. My grandfather worked in the theatre and was a good craftsman. I believe it was from him that I got my love of things made of recycled material and wood, glass and metal. He used to make me toys. His workshop was in the attic and I used to go there and watch him. I remember him making me a rifle and how it seemed to take forever.

"In a funny sort of way, my love for his hand-made toys was partly why my

parents took me back with them to France. Once it became possible to return to Yugoslavia without being jailed, my parents came to visit as often as they could. One time they brought me a suitcase full of French toys, the kind of toys that children's dreams are supposedly made of: brightly-coloured plastic and all that, but I didn't want them. I crossed my arms, rose to what little height I had, and sneered, 'I don't want your capitalistic toys!'.

"I was only five, after all, and my parents knew I must be angry at them for leaving me behind. But what worried them were the words I was using. To save me from being brainwashed by the system they'd escaped from, my parents took me back to France with them.".

FROM HAND IN FIST TO PENCIL IN HAND

"That first year at school in Lyon was difficult for me. I didn't know the language so I had to take special French lessons with the other immigrant children. Which were at the expense of all the "extra" classes and meant that I couldn't attend the art class. It was very frustrating for me because in my grandparents' house I drew all the time. I became very aggressive and had a fight practically every day at school. Some of my fellow-pupils ended up in the emergency room.

"My school was in a rough neighbourhood. At the age of six, I was mugged at knife-point. Explaining to them that I was only a kid and that all I had were a few coins for chewing-gum made no difference.

"This all changed when my parents moved to another part of the city. The headmaster had called to tell them their son had big behavioural problems at school, but was also getting the highest grades in his year. He advised them to move me to a better school.

"My new school was pretty much the same as the old one, except now I was at the bottom of the class. I had a reputation as a fighter and everybody wanted to fight me. I decided that this time around I'd hit first, not wait to be hit.

"After a while I was sent to the headmaster's office. I didn't care if he beat me, but I was worried in case he called my parents, because I knew they'd ask me what on Earth I thought I was doing: they were working hard for my sake, so I could get a decent education. But the headmaster just taped a blank sheet of paper to the wall and asked me to draw him a house. I finished my picture as fast as I could and waited for him to continue with my strange punishment, but instead of smacking me with it or tearing it up, he took it down and told me to follow him.

"When we came into the hall I was surprised to see the whole school waiting there for us. The headmaster put up my picture and made me stand next to it as everybody filed past, and as they did he asked each in turn: 'Why can't you draw a house like that?' I knew I'd just dashed it off so the whole process seemed stupid.

"When the dreaded call home never materialised, I realised the "punishment" was simply to put me in my place. But I also learned that my skill in drawing was worth something and from then on it was all I ever did in my spare time. If my friends asked me to come and play in the street I'd say I was busy. 'Doing what?', they asked. 'Drawing!' I replied.

"And it seems to me I've been meeting the same people on that very same street corner all my life. They've grown older over the years, but they always ask the same question and receive the same answer: 'Drawing!'".

THE THREE R'S: ARITHMATIC, ART AND THE ARMY

"My parents wanted me to become a physicist. I was happy enough with that so I studied physics and mathematics at college. But I still drew in my spare time and one day a girl I knew asked me to correct some sketches she was sending to a nation-wide fashion competition. I found it easier to start again from scratch, which I did, telling the girl to submit them in her name. But as the closing date of the competition approached, the girl started to push me to enter them myself and on the last day I sent them in. I came first!

"The prize included a trip to Paris, so I spent a fortnight visiting the museums, going around the city, soaking up the life there and being praised for my drawings. I made up my mind to quit physics and study art. My parents were against it, but I'd earned enough money the summer before to do it anyway.

"In Paris my money ran out quickly and so I got a job at the radio station answering the phones. I just turned up and started work there and then. The manager didn't like the way I'd practically given myself the job, but he let me stay: I was lucky. The job gave me a chance to live a great life without having much money: I was always getting free tickets to the cinema, to concerts and exhibitions.

"There was a comic book publisher in the same studio and the people from the publishing house saw some of the sketches I used to do when it was quiet. They were in the process of transforming their comic into a magazine, and they asked me if I'd like to do some stuff for them. I got to do styling for the fashion pieces. I designed jewellery and I got to try out some of my own ideas.

"By this time, I was becoming increasingly fed up with art college, and how subjective the teachers were. Instead of encouraging us to develop individual styles, they were more interested in making clones of themselves. And I was beginning to see that the diploma was less important than what you actually did. So I decided it was time to quit the school and get my national service out of the way.

"I learnt a lot about fashion in the army! After about a month you begin to see how everyone adjusts their uniform to make it their own, letting down the jacket by a centimetre, or placing the cap at an angle. I discovered that personality is a strong enough force to shine through even the most limited materials.".

OUT OF SE[illegible] INTO THE HOUSE OF GAULTIER

"I'd talked to Jean Paul Gaultier before I went into the army and told him I wanted to work for him. He said I should come and see him when I'd finished my national service, so I did.

"I was on 24 hours leave when I took my portfolio to Gaultier's offices. I was told it wasn't possible to see him without an appointment and that I could only book one by telephone. I didn't have much time so I went and called from the nearest phone box. I got the same man, who was clearly surprised, but I reminded him that he'd told me to call this number to make an appointment. Could I meet him now? He repeated that it was impossible for me to see M. Gaultier that day so I just said 'OK, I'm on my way!'.

"In the end I had to force my heavy army boot through the door. I think the guy got frightened because he let me in and started to speak quietly to someone over the phone. Later I discovered he was telling another assistant that he had this really boring bloke on his hands, and could he come and pretend to look at the portfolio?

"When that assistant came I refused to show him anything and said I was there to meet M. Gaultier - and nobody else. In a last attempt to save the day they called in Gaultier's press officer. I felt I could talk to her, so I showed her my pictures and then she asked if she could take a few of them to Gaultier. She was gone for ages and I waited, thinking 'What's she doing? What's she doing?'.

"When she finally came back she said, 'I'm sorry, M. Gaultier can't see you...' (my heart sank), '...but if you come back in an hour he'll talk to you.' I met Gaultier and he asked me what I could do. I said I knew how to do almost everything and what I didn't I know. I picked up quickly.

"'But what can you do?' he insisted. So I started reeling off my skills: 'I can weld metals. I know how to work in plastic. I'm good with wood, with electronics. I paint. I make jewellery...' I'd made my point.

"I was given a job, doing everything from glasses and ties to the electronics for the shows. I also worked on projects that weren't directly to do with fashion - different things for the musicians and movies Gaultier was designing for. Working for him was nice; he pushed me in directions I wouldn't have explored by myself. He taught me how to use colours and, most importantly, to do things with humour.".

TOWARDS THE YEAR "TWO ZERO ZERO ZERO"

"After eight years I felt it was time to move on and do things on my own. I made my decision after we'd finished a show and before I knew it, I'd told Gaultier I was leaving. He said 'Go on, then...' thinking I meant I was going home or something!

But when I'd corrected him, his face became a big smile and he wished me good luck.

"It was scary at first having to be my own boss, strange not to wake up in the morning and go to a known place, to work on sure projects. I didn't know if I'd get any work. But then the jobs started rolling in, sometimes from people I'd met while working for Gaultier.

"One morning I got a phone call from a big advertising agency and was asked if I was Jean-Baptiste Mondino's model-maker. I said 'Yes, that's me!' even though I didn't know what a model-maker was. Mondino and I had talked some years earlier about how we'd like to work together in the future, and I figured it was the future now. And that's how I became a model-maker.

"I've been lucky in working with people who are happy to let me take risks and come up with provocative ideas. If I'm given a sketch to work from, I do more than give people exactly what they want. I try to do it much better than they could have ever dreamt of- and sometimes their own dreams are moving very fast! Like when I built an old city with cars for Michel Gondry (for Donald Fagen's 'Snowbound' video). Gondry came to me every day with new requests:
'Could you make me a car, but with hands?'
Sure!
Then the next day it was: 'Can you make a model of the same car but twice as big?'
Of course!
And then: 'How about 10 cars, 12 times smaller?'
OK!
And so on...

"I don't like all the nostalgia that seems to fascinate people. Looking backwards just makes them end up going round and round in faster and faster circles. I try to follow the advice I got from a girlfriend– 'Adric, don't look back. Look toward the year Two Zero Zero Zero.' I'm into everything new and nuclear, technology. I love optimistic science that promises to change the world. It's like this 1950s Russian poster I have. There's a man standing heroically in front of a power plant, holding up a card with a little hole in it. A beam of light shines through the hole and there are nuclear particles hovering about it.

"But I suppose the past has its place and does have its influences on me. I am fond of recycling material, using old things in new ways. I like things that are worn and show the passing of time, like the teddy bear in the 'Human Behaviour' video. On the tour set for Björk you can see all those things working together. Old meets New, high-tech materials sit alongside wood, science fiction meets romanticism, purity mixes with excess– at that moment of unity, we reach into the future..."

POST

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